

Hafa Adai!

DPS expends over \$7M in 2023. **PAGE 2**

IPI gets go-signal to take down 3 cranes. **PAGE 3**

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THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Uncompensated care costs CHCC nearly \$12M deficit

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**
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REPORTER

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES

The Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. held a special board meeting yesterday evening to give its board of trustees a brief overview of CHCC's financial status. One of the issues brought to light by CHCC chief financial officer Perlita Santos was the whopping deficit incurred in fiscal year 2023.

The Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. has incurred a nearly \$12-million deficit in fiscal year 2023 alone due to uncompensated care, or health services the hospital provides to patients that are unable to pay.

It was learned during a special board meeting yesterday that CHCC incurred a whopping \$11.7-million deficit last fiscal year, based on figures cited by CHCC chief financial

officer Perlita Santos, who cited uncompensated care as the main reason for this loss.

True, CHCC has been in deficit for many years now, *See CHCC on Page 4*

Palacios: We're over-reliant on China

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**
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REPORTER

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios says his position on China has not changed and he still wants the CNMI to pivot away from its over-reliance on the China market, but that doesn't mean he is against Chinese tourists visiting the islands. Speaking with reporters



Palacios

after MVA's annual general membership meeting yesterday at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan, Palacios said he believes the CNMI is over-reliant on the China market.

"We were over-reliant on the market. I'm not saying we aren't welcoming them, I never said that. We're just going to pivot away from *See PALACIOS on Page 4*

NOTING THAT MESS INVOLVING IPI HAPPENED DURING THEIR WATCH

Flores to CCC board: Resign!

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
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REPORTER

Noting that all the mess involving casino operator Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC occurred during their watch, Rep. Marissa Renee Flores (Ind-Saipan) yesterday urged all Commonwealth Casino Commission board members to resign.

Also, at the CCC monthly *See FLORES on Page 4*



FERDIE DE LA TORRE

Rep. Marissa Renee Flores (Ind-Saipan) gestures as she speaks during the public comments portion of the Commonwealth Casino Commission's monthly meeting yesterday. She called for an immediate revocation of Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC's casino license and asked all CCC board members to resign.

» IPI director Chi discloses that 5 legislators met with potential casino investors

Woman sues NAP alleging unlawful termination

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**
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REPORTER

A woman has recently filed a lawsuit against the Nutrition

Assistance Program at the Superior Court alleging unlawful termination.

Vanessa Andres, a former NAP certification unit super-

visor, is suing her former employer for allegedly unlawfully terminating her.

Andres, through her attorney Keith Chambers, is asking

the Superior Court to issue an order reinstating her to her previous position and award her back pay.

See WOMAN on Page 4

INSIDE

LOCAL

The Saipan Awaodori Team returned from several successful performances over the weekend in Guam.

PAGE 9



BUSINESS

Hyatt Regency Saipan will officially welcome the Christmas season by unveiling this year's theme "Tropical Christmas at Hyatt Regency Saipan."

PAGE 14



WORLD

Israel and Hamas on Thursday agreed to extend a temporary truce by another day minutes before it was set to expire.

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Local

DPS expends over \$7M in 2023

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**
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REPORTER

The Department of Public Safety has expended over \$7 million in fiscal year 2023.

According to DPS' community-centric report that it released earlier this month, in total, the department has expended \$7,549,250.39, about \$2,448.96 more than they were allotted by the government which was about \$7,546,801.

Breaking it down, DPS said it spent about \$124,649.70 under the commissioner's office, \$224,840.54 under the division of motor vehicles, \$399,578.23 under the administration division, and \$6,800,181.92 under the po-

lice division.

DPS stated in its report that a large portion of the allotted budget for fiscal year 2023 was prioritized for personnel salary.

DPS currently employs 34 civilian and 178 sworn personnel.

Second to salary was operational cost with the largest expense being gas and vehicle maintenance for DPS' fleet.

DPS also procured 25 units of electronic citation hardware for Highway Patrol and Patrol vehicles.

Meanwhile, DPS said it also spent on various trainings and conferences which were attended virtually. These trainings focused on Standardized Field Sobriety Testing and Training Laser/Radar Training.

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IPI gets go-signal to take down 3 cranes

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
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REPORTER

The contractor hired to dismantle Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC's three construction cranes atop its unfinished casino/resort buildings in Garapan has been given the go-signal to start taking them down.

Public Works Secretary Ray N. Yumul informed Ocean Bee LLC manager He Quo Xiang in the notice-to-proceed he issued Wednesday that the start date for the dismantling/removal of the cranes begins today, Friday. Ocean Bee LLC received the notice yesterday.

As per the terms of the contract, taking down the three cranes should be done within 30 calendar days, which will place the completion date on Dec. 31, 2023.

During the monthly meeting of the Commonwealth Casino Commission board yesterday, Lito Parulan, spokesperson of Ocean Bee LLC, said they already assessed the cranes yesterday and will start the actual dismantling today.

Parulan said everything has already been coordinated with DPW, IPI, the Department of Public Safety, and Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

He said they will first dis-

mantle tower crane No. 5 that is facing the Joeten Hafa Aдай Shopping Center, then tower crane No. 6 and crane No. 1.

Parulan said police officers will be on the traffic side, while DPW and OSHA will monitor and check the operations.

He said Ocean Bee already submitted the documents that DPW required.

Yvonne B. Tenorio, who is the acting DPW Building Safety official, recently asked Ocean Bee to submit documents for their review and approval before it starts removing the cranes.

The requested documents are bonding insurance, list of employees hired for the work, and timeframe for dismantling the tower cranes.

Last Oct. 5, Tenorio required IPI to disassemble crane No. 5 immediately as it poses an imminent threat to public safety and properties.

Crane No. 5 has reportedly not been used since December 2020.

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WOMAN

From page 1

Chambers, in his motion, said the Superior Court has jurisdiction over his client's case because, despite filing an administrative appeal months back at the agency level, her appeal has yet to proceed.

"Because there is no definite timeline for Ms. Andres' appeal to be heard by the Civil Service Commission, and Ms. Andres has already waited months to receive the justice she deserves, Ms. Andres respectfully argues that this court exercise its subject matter jurisdiction over this matter," the lawyer said.

According to the lawsuit, while Andres was a certification unit supervisor for NAP, on March 18, 2022, Andres submitted an application for Nutrition Assistance on behalf of her boyfriend Jose Blas Manglona Jr.'s daughter who lived with them.

The application listed the daughter as the head of household.

The application indicated that the daughter is under the age of 18; lacks a bank account; lacks employment; and appointed her father, Manglona, as her authorized representative.

Andres did not sign the application.

As part of the application, Andres submitted and signed a Declaration of Basic Needs and Living Arrangements.

In a Statement of Support, Andres stated that she provided the daughter with "free housing, utilities, laundry, transportation and basic needs at no cost."

The statement of support also stated that the housing structure consists of three bedrooms, two restrooms and two kitchens"; Andres and the daughter had "separate living arrangements"; Andres and the daughter "do not share or prepare food or meals"; and the daughter had "her own kitchen to prepare her own meals: to include storing her food."

The daughter also submitted an Expense Questionnaire

Form that answered accurately the questions posed.

The daughter printed her name on the bottom of the Expense Questionnaire Form, but Manglona signed the form as the authorized representative.

According to Andres' appeal, NAP failed to do a home check as required by the regulations.

"Had NAP performed the home check as required by the regulations, they would have seen that the daughter has her own living space and kitchen area," Chambers said.

After Andres submitted the application, and per her duties as a certification unit supervisor, she assigned the application to NAP representative Frances Cruz.

Based on the documents submitted, Cruz approved the daughter's application on March 29, 2022.

Andres played no role in the application's approval process and was not in contact with Cruz concerning the application Chambers said.

After the application was

approved, Andres was seen by NAP personnel in a vehicle with her boyfriend and the daughter's authorized representative, Manglona, in the drive-thru line to pick up benefits.

On June 1, 2022, an investigation was opened into the filing and approval of the application.

The investigation resulted in the Notice of Proposed Adverse Action-Termination or PAA issued on May 19, 2023.

The PAA stated that, per the NAP rules, the daughter was not qualified for food stamp benefits due to her age; and neither Andres nor Manglona submitted their financial information along with the application.

The PAA alleged misuse of authority as a certification unit supervisor and potential fraud.

The PAA recommended Andres' termination from her employment.

Andres appealed the PAA to her appointing authority who, on June 26, 2023, issued a Final Decision on Adverse Action, which gave full effect

to the PAA as originally proposed and terminated Andres' employment.

On July 12, 2023, Andres filed her appeal with the Civil Service Commission.

However, at the time, CSC informed Andres' counsel that the commission did not have a hearing officer and did not

have a plan to retain one in the immediate future.

On Oct. 2, 2023, Andres' counsel was informed by a CSC representative that the commission still did not have a hearing officer due to a lack of funding and that they were not sure when one would be retained.

FLORES

From page 1

board meeting yesterday, IPI manager/director Howyo Chi disclosed that five legislators have met with investors who are willing to invest in IPI, but they (lawmakers) requested that IPI be excluded from the meeting.

Speaking during the public comments portion of the board meeting, Flores said that IPI's casino license must be revoked not next week or next month but that day (yesterday).

"We have spent too much money and wasted too much time already on this failed monstrosity. The casino is a failure. It is a blight on our community and every day it continues to exist is one day too long," Flores said.

She said its very existence has caused the CNMI to be blacklisted.

Flores said honest people do not want to invest in a business venture that has been federally investigated and tourists do not appreciate an abandoned building in the middle of their vacation.

"In terms of safety, do we need the crane to fall on one of our residents or tourists before we bring it down?" the lawmaker asked.

Flores also noted the Beijing Court's decision that found IPI's former project director Ji Xiaobo involved in criminal activities.

"I want to know what you're going to do about it because apparently, you did not regulate them well enough. You failed to conduct your due diligence," Flores told the board.

On behalf of the people of the CNMI and the people of her precinct, all CCC board members should resign as this whole mess happened under their watch, she said.

"You need to be held accountable and you need to be relieved of your duty so someone else can do the job that you have failed to do. Have some respect for the people and resign quickly and quietly and show that you have the competence to do this one act correctly," Flores said.

Reps. Edwin K. Propst (D-Saipan) and Vicente Camacho (D-Saipan) also spoke at the meeting where they called for the immediate revocation of IPI's casino license.

In response to commission-

er Rafael Demapan's question, IPI's Chi disclosed that it is his understanding that potential casino investors have met with five CNMI legislators who requested that IPI be excluded from the meeting.

Sen. Corina L. Magofna (Ind-Saipan), who chairs the Senate Gaming Commission and attended the CCC board meeting yesterday, quickly clarified she was not one of the five legislators.

In response to CCC board chair Edward C. DeLeon Guerrero's inquiries, Chi said they are aware of the Beijing Court's decision, but they're only allegations as Ji Xiaobo has not been found guilty yet.

As far as IPI CNMI is concerned, they are not doing anything illegal, Chi pointed out.

Chi said he has read the court decision and that he did not see any mention that Ji is a leader of a criminal syndicate—as stated in a magazine and news outlets.

DeLeon Guerrero recounted that they have actually started initiating investigations into these alleged criminal activities as part of the commission's ongoing oversight and in the interest of maintaining the integrity of the CNMI's gaming industry.

However, given their limited manpower for this effort, DeLeon Guerrero said the reached out to ask for help from the Office of the Attorney General and was trying to get even the Department of Public Safety to help them.

The chairman asked Chi to provide CCC documents and information relating to the suitability of IPI's owners. DeLeon Guerrero said the Commission will be writing Chi about this and they expect the answers to be given in 10 days.

He said they want a list of all persons associated with IPI, including their names, the way in which they are or were associated with IPI, and names of the association, disclosure of any criminal investigations or convictions for all persons associated with IPI, details of all investors with significant stake in the casino here, including names, ownership percentages, and background information, among other information.

A longer version of this story is available at www.saipantribune.com

PALACIOS

From page 1

that, given the reality of the geopolitical [situation] and the politics within our federal government as well as China," he said.

Addressing Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to the United States and his meeting with President Joe Biden, Palacios said the federal government hasn't really made its position with China clear.

"The President of China recently went to the United States to meet with President Biden but what has happened with that. What is the real federal position on this situation? We've got to remember that Chinese tourists travel to the States and around the world, but they need to get a visa. We have a unique visa but that is

very tenuous. I keep saying that that is a very tenuous visa that can be recalled at the discretion of the secretary of Homeland Security," he said.

Because the CNMI's visa waiver program including China could be recalled at any time by the federal government, Palacios said its best for the CNMI to stay out of its radar to avoid a complete collapse of the China market.

Chinese tourists are able to enter the CNMI via a limited visa waiver program that was granted the CNMI by DHS. Visa waivers are usually granted on a case-by-case basis and at the discretion of DHS.

Palacios said the CNMI needs to be aware and mindful of what's going on in this region of the world.

"We are a small U.S. territory, very dependent on the China market (which was about

50% of our market). If that collapses, then we still have problems. I've been warning that we shouldn't even be talking too much about this market because the more we talk about it, there's also that potential of putting us on the radar. We hope things ease up with our federal government and China and that their relationship gets back to normal pre-COVID, but until such time, we're very vulnerable. It's a federal policy that can completely pull our visa," he said.

All that the CNMI can do, Palacios said, is to continue to get new markets to come to the CNMI.

"We are not positioning ourselves to make Korea our No. 1 market but it is what it is. We're trying to get other markets and get the Japan market going. Chinese tourists are still able to come in. In fact, Hong

Kong is a visa-free market and Hong Kong Airlines has expressed interest and that is good," he said.

During a presentation by MVA's Japan partners in yesterday's meeting, it was learned that more Chinese tourists than Japanese tourists have been flying to Saipan from Japan in the past few months.

Private sector stakeholders in the CNMI have been pushing to have the CNMI exempted from the U.S. Department of Transportation's China Order Part 213, which essentially caps the number of flights from China to the entire United States, including territories.

Currently the cap is 24 outbound flights from China to the U.S. per month. This means the CNMI is currently competing with destinations like Los Angeles, other mainland states, and Hawaii.

CHCC

From page 1

Santos said, but based on the history of uncompensated care from 2018 to 2023, the deficit significantly dropped during the COVID-19 pandemic due to Presumptive Eligibility, when the federal government subsidized many patient costs.

When the Presumptive Eligibility program ended in fiscal year 2022, the deficit then rose exponentially, she said.

Specifically, CHCC's deficit was about \$5.7 million in fiscal year 2021. That number climbed to about \$9 million in fiscal year 2022, then climbed to nearly \$12 million in fiscal year 2023, Santos said. Prior to the pandemic, CHCC's

deficit from uncompensated care ranged from \$12.7 million to \$17.6 million, dating back to fiscal year 2018.

"There's a lot of components to uncompensated care. With Presumptive Eligibility, we saw a decline in uncompensated care from 2020 through 2022. In 2022, despite having Presumptive Eligibility, we incurred \$9 million in uncompensated care [due to] of Medicaid not remitting from June to September. It reached pre-pandemic levels again in 2023 due to the suspension of Presumptive Eligibility," she said.

In explaining why CHCC incurs uncompensated care, Santos said that hospitals are prohibited from asking patient for their ability to pay when

they enter the emergency room, pursuant to the Emergency Medical Treatment & Labor Act, or EMTALA. This is one of the reasons CHCC racks up so much in uncompensated care, she added.

Another reason why is the CNMI's inability to match Medicaid allocations, causing Medicaid to default on payments, as well as uninsured care, sliding fees, and co-pay deductibles not being paid.

"Uncompensated care are the bills that we were unable to convert to cash. These are either co-pay deductibles or actual uninsured care. These are also the uncovered costs for sliding fee discounts. These are also unpaid benefits," said Santos.

When asked whether or not

CHCC goes after individuals who have not settled their bills, Santos said CHCC does not.

"We do send bills, statements, but these are not paid. We don't take these people to court because we don't go after the indigent. When we do follow up procedures for billing, we prioritize reconciling with third-party payers like insurance [or] guarantors versus the indigent. These deficits are absorbed by CHCC," she said.

CHCC CEO Esther Muña also noted that CHCC also has patients who have been discharged with nowhere to go so the hospital still provides care for them. This also contributes to the large deficit seen last fiscal year.

"It's not billable, not collectable," she said.

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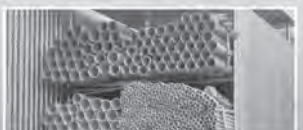


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Santos, Chen top NMI Congressional App Challenge



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Mount Carmel School principal Filmah Buenaflor, left, and students Paul Santos and Jerry Chen.

Mount Carmel School seniors Paul Santos and Jerry Chen's winning app called NoteTime has won this year's NMI Congressional App Challenge.

Their web-based application, NoteTime, automatically saves notes and allows users to access them through a menu. The team of two will receive national recognition and have their work

eligible for display in the U.S. Capitol and will also be invited to attend the House of Code reception in Washington, D.C. this summer.

"Please join me in congratulating Paul and Jerry" Sablan said. "I am proud of all the amazing talent our students have displayed this year."

This team of two was one of

17 total submissions this year, an increased participation from last year.

The Congressional App Challenge is an annual competition open to middle and high school students. Anyone interested in joining next year's competition can visit <https://www.congressionalappchallenge.us/>. (PR)

MVA: Safety first for tomorrow's Hell of Marianas



MVA

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The Marianas Visitors Authority is asking the full cooperation of the community to make sure that each of the cyclists taking part in tomorrow's 2023 Hell of the Marianas Century Cycle starts and finishes the race safely.

The Marianas Visitors Authority is urging the Saipan community to warmly welcome cyclists competing in tomorrow's Hell of the Marianas Century Cycle, with priority on keeping competitors safe.

As of Nov. 30, 157 cyclists from five countries and territories are scheduled take to the island's roadways beginning at 6:30am at Mariana Resort & Spa. Cyclists will travel south on Beach Road to Kobleville, proceed to Kagman, Capital Hill, and Talofofo, and then down Capital Hill to As Matuis and Marpi, finishing around noontime.

The race, jointly organized the MVA and Northern Mariana Islands Cycling Federation, attracts cyclists from around the world to take on the island's challenging terrain. To ensure a safe and enjoyable race for all, the organizers are urging all dog owners to leash their pets and all drivers to drive with caution along the race route for the duration of the race.

"Safety is a first priority for us during the race, and we are asking the full cooperation of our community to make sure that each of our cyclists starts and finishes the race safely," said MVA managing director Christopher A. Concepcion. "We want to avoid any

See MVA on Page 7

Commonwealth Zoning Board Hearing

December 07, 2023 | 2:30 PM
Zoning Office Conference Room
Chalan Laulau, Saipan

Caller Box 10007, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel. 670-234-9661/2/3, FAX 234-9666
zoningboard@cnmzoning.com

AGENDA

A. Preliminary Matters

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call

B. Public Comment

C. Evidentiary Hearing

The Commonwealth Zoning Board will be conducting an Evidentiary Hearing for ABM Auto Repair Shop regarding Notice of Violation #2019-4835. This shop is located on Lot No. E.A. 368 in the village of Chalan Kanoa, within the Village Commercial zoning district.

D. Adjournment

/s/Henry Hofschneider, Chairman

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MVA

From page 6

incident of cyclists having accidents because of unleashed dogs, so we ask all dog owners to ensure their pets are fenced or tied during the race. Also, we remind all drivers to drive slowly and to follow the direction of traffic officers at intersections along the route. A big thanks to all for supporting tourism with these small but important efforts."

Participating countries to date are South Korea, Japan, Russia, Guam, and The Marianas. Started in 2007, Hell of the Marianas winds its way through Saipan's hills, valleys, and scenic byways. Participants must navigate 4,900 feet of ascents, including steep climbs and fast descents, mak-

ing it a true test of endurance and skill. The event is open to both amateur and professional riders. The race has become an important part of Saipan's sporting and cultural scene and has helped raise awareness of the island's unique natural beauty and cultural heritage.

"We welcome groups, families, businesses who are interested in cheering on our racers along the course. Racers love that," Concepcion added. "Together, we can help build the reputation of Hell of The Marianas in the region and around the world as one of the safest, most enjoyable, and must-do races for cyclists."

For more information, visit www.hellofthemarianas.com or contact NMI Cycling Federation president Vince Seman at nmicycling@gmail.com. (MVA)

EARTHQUAKE BRIEFS**5.0-magnitude quake in Maug**

At 4:34pm on Nov. 27, 2023, a report of a 5.0-magnitude earthquake occurred in the Maug Islands region, Northern Mariana Islands. Currently, there are no reports of injuries or damages and no tsunami warnings or advisories were issued by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center.

For more information, contact the CNMI EOC State Warning Point at 237-8000. (PR)

5.0-magnitude quake in Pagan

At 7:01am on Nov. 25, 2023, a report of a 5.0-magnitude earthquake occurred in the Pagan region, Northern Mariana Islands. Currently, there are no tsunami warnings or advisories that were issued by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center.

For more information, please contact the CNMI EOC State Warning Point at 670-237-8000. (PR)

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SNILD confirms three SHEFA board nominees



FERDIE DE LA TORRE

Kaelani Marie B. Demapan, second from left front row, and Henry Kyle B. Hofschneider, extreme right front row, pose for a group photo with members of the Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation after the SNILD confirmed on Wednesday their re-appointment to continue serving as board members of the Saipan Higher Education Financial Assistance. Also in the photo are acting Saipan Mayor Carmen Cabrera Pangelinan, third from left front row, and SHEFA administrator Michelle Rasa, extreme left front row.

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation confirmed Wednesday the re-appointment of Kaelani Marie B. Demapan and Henry Kyle B. Hofschneider, as well as the appointment of Guadalupe A. Ingham, to serve on the board of the Saipan Higher Education Financial Assistance.

Nineteen SNILD members present at the session voted to adopt the SNILD Judiciary and Governmental Operations Committee's reports that recommend confirming the re-appointment of Demapan and Hofschneider to continue serving on the SHEFA board.


Eighteen SNILD members voted "yes" and Rep. Blas Jonathan T. Attao (Ind-Saipan) voted "present" to a motion to adopt the committee's report that recommended confirming the appointment of Ingham.

Reps. Ralph N. Yumul (Ind-Saipan) and Joseph Flores (Ind-Saipan) were absent but excused from the session.

According to its reports, the SNILD JGO Committee is confident that all appointees possess the qualifications and leadership skills necessary to serve as members of the SHEFA board, based on the overall assessment of their credentials, experiences, testimonies, goals for the board, and other relevant issues considered.

Saipan Mayor Ramon "RB" Jose Blas Camacho reappointed Demapan and Hofschneider last Aug. 31 to continue serving the board. The mayor appointed Ingham last Nov. 7.

Acting Saipan mayor Carmen Cabrera Pangelinan thanked the delegation for confirming the three nominees, saying they have been entrusted by the mayor for their administration of the SHEFA program.



**PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
CNMI GOVERNMENT**

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
RFP24-DCCA/CCDF-42400013**

SUBMISSION DATE: JANUARY 03, 2024 TIME: 09:00 A.M.

**"CNMI Early Childhood
Workforce Registry"**

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED ON THE MUNIS VENDOR SELF SERVICE PORTAL (<https://selfservice.dof.gov.mp/vss/>) OR AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES, LOCATED AT BLDG NO. 12552, ANATAHAN DRIVE, CAPTIOL HILL, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.


QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS RFP CAN BE MADE TO THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS BY DECEMBER 29, 2023, TO MRS. ESTER WABOL VIA EMAIL AT ewabol.ccdf@childcare.gov.mp

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

**/S/ VIVIAN T. SABLAN
ACTING SECRETARY, DCCA**

**/S/ BRIEN S. NICHOLAS JR.
ACTING DIRECTOR, PS**



AMIM passes resolution congratulating new UOG president



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Seated front row, Guam Mayor Louise Rivera, AMIM director Angel Sablan, Saipan and Northern Islands Municipal Council vice chair Tonie Tudela, Hagatna Mayor John Cruz, Agana Heights Mayor Paul McDonald, Saipan council chair Marian Tudela. Standing in background, Rota Municipal Council's Jim Atalig, Rota Mayor Aubry Hocog, Tinian Mayor Edwin Aldan, Dededo Mayor Melissa Savares, Agat Mayor Kevin Susuico, Sinajana Mayor Robert Hofman, Tinian and Agrihan Municipal Council's Steve Cabrera, Barrigada Mayor June Blas, Tinian council's Ana San Nicolas, Humatak Mayor Johnny Quinata, and Malessso Mayor Ernest Chargualaf.

The Association of Mayors, Vice Mayors and Municipal Council adopted Resolution No. 2023-28-01 recognizing and congratulating Dr. Anita Borja-Enriquez on the occasion of her investiture as president of the University of Guam at the Calvo Field House in Mangilao, Guam last Nov. 14.

The resolution also recognized the new UOG president's exemplary leadership and achievement as the second Chamorro woman in UOG's 70-year history of service and leadership in academia serving the Marianas and Micronesia.

AMIM was established to promote, preserve, strengthen, and celebrate the cultural traditions and heritage of the people of the Mariana Islands as well serve as a forum for collaborative partnership among the Mariana Islands through their elected municipal government leaders.

The AMIM resolution expresses pride and joins the university community in celebrating the investiture of Borja-Enriquez as the 12th president of UOG.

It also recognizes Borja-Enriquez's achievement as the second Chamorro woman president of UOG in its 70-year history as an institution of higher learning in Micronesia and applauds her 30-year journey at the university as its senior vice president and provost, and the first Chamorro dean of the UOG School of Business and Public Administration for 10 years prior to taking on the helm as its president.

The resolution applauds the president's stewardship in the preservation of the Marianas-native ifit tree on campus during the Nov. 13, 2023 ceremonial ifit-tree planting at UOG's President Grove, and noted that the planting of the hardwood tree is the epitome of the passion and commitment

by Borja-Enriquez in caring for and nurturing the young ifit tree grow to maturity, the same passion and commitment she has applied over time in helping the youths successfully matriculate at the university as its senior vice president and provost, and the cumulative experience and skill sets the new UOG president is expected to perform for the youths of the Marianas and Micronesia to receive the best well-rounded higher education.

AMIM describes Borja-Enriquez as a woman who is determined and strongly rooted in the cultural traditions and heritage of the people of the Mariana Islands, and more importantly practices the Chamorro cultural traditions in *inadahi, inina, na'i animu, and inafa' maolek*.

The resolution was passed when AMIM held its annual meeting in Agat, Guam last Nov. 29. (PR)

Saipan Awaodori Team impresses crowds in Guam performances



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Saipan Awaodori Team performs at the Guam Japanese School.

By MARK RABAGO

mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
EDITOR

The Saipan Awaodori Team returned from several successful performances over the weekend in Guam that culminated in the 42nd Akimatsuri Japanese Autumn Festival.

Eleven members of the Japanese traditional dance troupe flew and performed in the U.S. territory—Coddie Forbes, Owen Quitugua, Jonathan Agulto, Cassidy Wabol, Vianny Mettao, Jeafanie Tibong, Leon Wabol, Gizelle Cabaobas, Marcela Heben, Julianne Mettao, and Ina Mettao, along with PDM Promoters, Inc. promoter and CEO Misako Kamata.

It marked the second time the Saipan Awaodori Team performed in the Akimatsuri Japanese Autumn Festival after the group also made the trip last year, which marked its first off-island performance after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Kamata was ecstatic with the group's performance and applauded the members for their hard work and teamwork.

"This year's team is from 8 years old to 20 years old and were all students. They were very successful in their performances because of teamwork. I felt that they took care of each other, respected each other, and then stepped up for each other. I saw from their smiling faces Awaodori passions and I enjoyed seeing them at all nine performances in Guam."

The Saipan Awaodori Team founder said as expected some members had the usual jitters during their first performances in Guam.

"First performance was very nervous but one by one they improved themselves. So, on the last day of our main

performance at the Japanese Festival 'Matsuri' we made the audience enjoy our impressions very much. I really appreciate everybody who made this happen and I am proud of my team," said Kamata.

Quitugua, a 16-year-old Awaodori drummer from Marianas High School, said he thoroughly enjoyed their performances in Guam.

"This is my first trip as an Awaodori performer. I enjoyed my experience in Guam. I learned things that I can do that I thought I couldn't like time management. During our performances, everyone was tired but no one gave up until the very end."

His sentiments were echoed by 17-year-old MHS student and Awaodori dancer Jeafanie Tibong.

"My experience in Guam especially with the crowd made me learn not to be shy. Having back-to-back performances was difficult but I made sure I don't look tired. My experience in Guam also helped me overcome the tension of interacting with the audience. My most memorable moment was most likely interacting with the kids while I was performing and seeing their faces like they're saying 'wow I've never seen anything like this before' which was my motivation to perform well for them and feel confident in my dancing."

Marcela Heben, a 16-year-old Awaodori dancer from Saipan Southern High School, congratulated her fellow Saipan Awaodori Team members for soldiering on despite the tight schedule of performances.

"The schedule was hectic but it was fun having to perform in different places for many different people as well.

The energy was heartwarming. My most memorable experience was when we would go near the audiences and seeing their smiles up close. It was very much enjoyable."

For Vianny Mettao, the entire trip to Guam was an unforgettable experience.

"It was fun and exciting to perform in Guam once again. It was my third time performing there. It's always an honor to have the opportunity to represent the CNMI," said the 17-year-old Awaodori dancer and drummer from SSHS.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO/

The Saipan Awaodori Team poses for a photo after performing at the Tamuning Man'amko Center.



Commonwealth Utilities Corporation

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PUBLIC NOTICE/AGENDA

Pursuant to the Open Government Act (1 CMC §9901 et seq), the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation ("CUC") Board of Directors hereby informs the general public that the Board will hold its regular board meeting on **Thursday, December 7, 2023, at 10:00 a.m.** The meeting will be held at the CUC Conference Room, Room 17, 3rd Floor, Joeten Dandan Building. The following agenda will be considered and public attendance is welcome.

- I. Preliminary Matters**
 - A. Call to Order
 - B. Roll Call
 - C. Adoption of Agenda*
 - D. Adoption of Minutes
 1. October 25, 2023 Regular Board Meeting
 2. October 25, 2023 Special Board Meeting
 - E. Correspondence
- II. Management Report**
 - A. Executive Director's Report
 - B. Chief Financial Officer's Report
 - C. Legal Counsel's Report
- III. Committee Reports**
 - A. Personnel Committee – Administrative Review Update
- IV. Old Business**
 - A. Proposed Amendments to CUC's Procurement Rules and Regulations
 - B. Classification and Compensation Plan
 - C. Amendment of CUC Board Bylaws
 - D. Bank Signatory and Policy
 - E. Net Metering
- V. New Business**
 - A. Appeal to the Board of Directors Re: Administrative Case No. 17-CUC-0001BD
- VI. Public Comments****
- VII. Executive Session***
- VIII. Announcements**
- IX. Adjournment**

/s/
JANICE A. TENORIO, CHAIRWOMAN

* In accordance with Public Law 8-41, additional agenda items may be added to the above listing only by a recorded vote of the majority members of the governing body.
** Pursuant to 1 CMC §9912, the CUC Board of Directors may vote to meet at any time in executive session, to consult with the Legal Counsel on matters deemed privileged and confidential.



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NOTICE OF APPLICATION As of December 01, 2023

THE FOLLOWING IS A PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF COASTAL PERMIT APPLICATIONS RECEIVED BY THE DCRM OFFICE:

APPLICANT	DATE APPLICATION RECEIVED	APPLICATION PROJECT DESCRIPTION	LOCATION	TYPE	STATUS
1. Chaoshan Qin	11/15/2023 RSm-2023-008	Demolition of Shoreline Pavilions	Tatacho/Milling Kattan, Rota	Shoreline	Application Under Review*
2. Chaoshan Qin	11/15/2023 RPlm-2023-009	CPA Commercial Perimeter Fencing	West Harbor, Rota	Ports & Industrial	Application Under Review*
3. Erick Van Der Maas	11/20/2023 SSm-2024-006	Demolition of Concrete Wall & Backfilling of Swimming Pool & Constructing a Concrete Slab	Garapan, Saipan	Shoreline	Approved* 11/28/2023
4. Division of Land & Natural Resources (DLNR)	11/21/2023 SSPILm-2024-007	Restore & Replace Damaged Materials of the Transient Dock	Garapan, Saipan	Shoreline, Ports & Industrial, Lagoon & Reef	Approved* 11/22/2023
5. Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC)	11/24/2023 SW-2024-008	Lower MIHA Sewer Line Replacement Project	Garapan, Saipan	Wetlands & Mangrove	Approved* 11/28/2023
4. Office of the Mayor of Rota	11/27/2023 RLRm-2023-010	East Harbor Marina Boat Ramp Repair	East Harbor, Rota	Lagoon & Reef	Application Under Review*

NMIAC §15-10-210 of the CRM Rules and Regulations requires all permit applications to be published in a newspaper for general circulation within the CNMI within 15 days of receipt of application. The list reflects recently received permit applications and those with a recent change in status. New applications are marked with an asterisk (*).

The Public is invited to submit written comments regarding any of the above projects for which a permit decision has not been issued. All permit comments should identify the project by application number. Your comments should be mailed or hand-delivered to the DCRM Office. All persons who desire a public hearing regarding any project may do so by submitting a written request for a public hearing to the DCRM Office within fourteen (14) days for minor permits (APCs) and proposed amended major sittings. Public Hearings are required for all new major siting projects. All public hearing notices are published in a local newspaper of general circulation. Residents of Rota and Tinian may submit comments and hearing requests to their local DCRM Coordinator. Persons wishing to retain the right to appeal a DCRM Permit decision must file a notice of appeal with the DCRM office within thirty (30) days of the issuance of the DCRM permit decision as provided in Part 200 § 15-10-235 of the DCRM Regulations.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Saipan Awaodori Team poses after their performance at the 42nd Guam Autumn Festival on Ypao Beach Park.

Opinion

Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

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Mark Rabago EDITOR
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MEMBER

AP The Associated Press

Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Israelis with loved ones held in Gaza poured their hearts out to us. One just got good news, gratefully

Our guests from Israel sat across from us around a large table. They spoke not of politics so much as personal pain.

What did they know of the whereabouts of their family members who had been taken hostage by Hamas, we asked them.

Very little, they said. One person pulled out a cellphone to play a short video, containing the image of a loved one, seemingly evidence of life. But once the footage was slowed down, it became clear to anyone watching that it had been doctored: Someone's hand passed through another in a way that physics does not allow. So there was small comfort there.

"All I know is that she is without her husband," said another of our guests, speaking of a family member, "and they are always together."

A third person focused on glasses: The image they had seen of their family member showed a person without eyewear, which meant, we were told, that they could not see. Nobody knew for sure, not even the Israeli officials accompanying the families of the hostages, whether any of them were alive or dead, let alone their location.

The Nov. 2 meeting was not only harrowing but illuminative of the spot in which these loving family members found themselves. None of them wanted to be seen as critical of the Israeli government. They made that clear.

But the unspoken truth of moments like these is that a nation's military or political agenda inevitably deviates from what matters the most to someone with a family member in harm's way. The plea from the other side of the table was simple: Bring home the people we love, alive and well. That above all else.

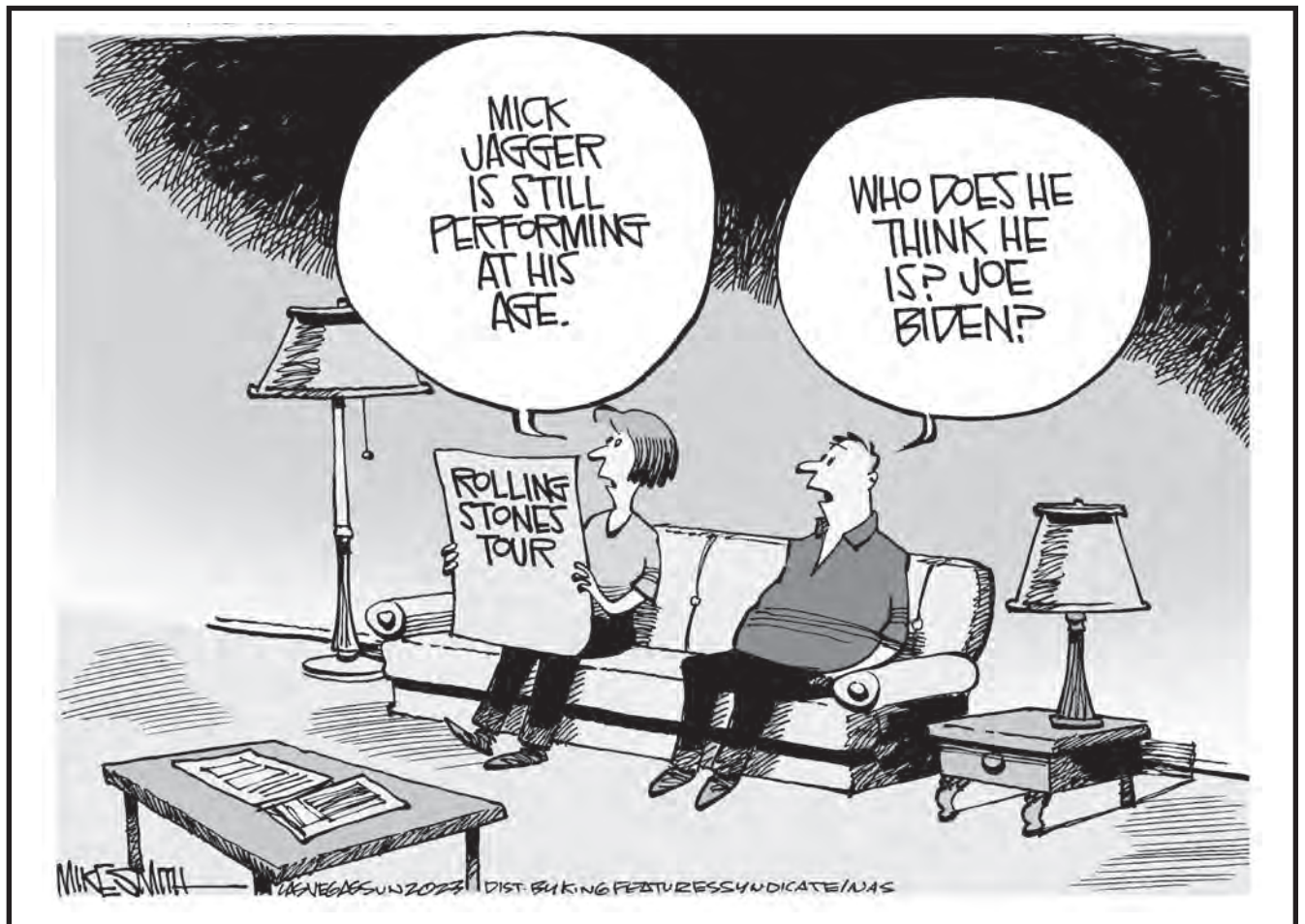
These and other family members moved heaven and earth to make that happen.

At some point, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu clearly made the determination that a swap for Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails was the only viable way to get hostages home. That decision came at some cost to Israel. It created a tacit equivalence between people, many of whom were convicted in a court of law, and those abducted. It allowed Hamas to dribble out hostages as it wished, even wishing them well for the cameras. It also meant Hamas could determine who was or was not released, likely based on what they saw and what stories they might tell about their treatment while captive.

But nobody who was in our meeting would be likely to dispute that Netanyahu, for all his other failings, made the right decision in this instance.

On Monday, we learned that one of the hostages released was

See ISRAELIS on Page 11



Palestinian and Israeli children are endangered by 'us vs. them' narratives

“What do you want to do when you grow up?” I asked Muhammad, an 8-year-old boy. “I want to kill Israeli soldiers!” he replied proudly.

This was in 1998, when I was teaching English in Shatila, a Palestinian refugee camp in Beirut. I’d come to Beirut to study abroad and explore my Arab roots, but as an American who’d never left the U.S., I was unprepared for the deep anger toward Israel that I encountered.

My young students provided history lessons I’d never gotten. They told me of the notorious Shatila massacre in the 1980s, facilitated by Israeli soldiers. They told me about the Nakba, when many of their grandparents had been displaced and rendered stateless during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.

Although they’d lived their whole lives inside Shatila, my students knew the names of the Palestinian villages their families came from. Some of their grandparents still kept the keys to houses that had been destroyed.

As much as I learned from them, I didn’t have the courage then to teach these children what I knew: that Israel had been created because of the murder of 6 million Jews in the Holocaust, and that antisemitism is as real and frightening as discrimination against Arabs and Muslims. I didn’t tell them that my best friend and my boyfriend were both Jewish.

Instead, I listened. I heard anger, fear, sadness and, yes—hatred. Back home, I was studying to be a history teacher. I wondered how these young Palestinians could understand their current situation without hearing from Israeli kids who knew the other side of their shared history, and who might simultaneously be forming the ambition to kill Palestinian militants. There is no mention of the Holocaust in Palestinian Authority textbooks, and the Nakba is called the War of Independence in Israeli textbooks.

My experience in Shatila led me to the central questions of my career as an educator: How can we tell young people the hard truths about history without perpetuating conflict? How do we resolve the different versions of the past that groups in conflict promote? How can we give kids a sense of pride in their identity without making them think other groups are inferior?

These questions have followed me throughout my career, and for me the solution remains the same. We have to teach hard histories in all their complexity. We have to create classrooms where students are free to question political orthodoxies. And we have to support the teachers who do this challenging and essential work.

Research shows that conflict thrives on simplistic narratives, when history is rarely that clear-cut. My own studies show that complicating easy narratives with messy truths can break down the misleading moral certainties people use to justify violence.

While traditional textbooks paint a veneer of false agree-

By **ROSALIE METRO**

Los Angeles Times

Rosalie Metro is an anthropologist of education and an associate teaching professor in the College of Education and Human Development at the University of Missouri-Columbia.



ment over vigorous historical debate, an approach that includes analyzing primary source documents teaches students to weigh evidence. “The Jewish State,” by Theodor Herzl, the Balfour Declaration, the Palestine Mandate, U.N. General Assembly Resolution 194, speeches by Golda Meir and Yasser Arafat, the Oslo accords, and firsthand accounts from places such as Auschwitz and Shatila are just a few such examples.

A technique known as applied theater provides another helpful approach to working with hard histories. The Israeli-Palestinian organization Combatants for Peace has led role-playing activities while facilitating encounters in which the two groups can hear each other’s stories. Similarly, scholars have held workshops in which Palestinian and Israeli teachers work together to construct historical narratives and have studied Palestinian-Jewish integrated educational contexts to understand their possibilities and limitations.

These explorations allow people to give nuance to “us vs. them” narratives. Muhammad was angry at Israeli soldiers, but not particularly at Lebanese authorities who kept refugees penned at Shatila, or at Palestinian politicians who failed their people. Israeli survivors of the Oct. 7 massacre will likely blame Hamas but may not be aware of how the Israeli campaign against the comparatively moderate Palestine Liberation Organization empowered Hamas.

Exploring history in these ways is risky. Adults have to be ready for kids to challenge everything they hold dear. Educational change moves slowly and is difficult to carry out during an ongoing conflict. But if we wait for the conflict to end before trying to make such changes, the delay could be interminable.

While we wait, Israeli and Palestinian children are forming memories of carnage, which will be reinforced by the one-sided narratives they hear in school, and the cycle of violence continues.

Innovative history education is necessary, but on its own is not sufficient to interrupt that cycle. Palestinian and Israeli kids need freedom, security and prosperity, and they deserve a full account of why this has been so hard to achieve. Lasting peace relies on safety, economic stability and just societies, but it can only be maintained with truth and understanding, which starts with education.

EDITORIAL POLICY

Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Guilty plea of Highland Park shooting suspect's father should be a wake-up call for parents

Robert Crimo Jr.'s guilty plea to reckless conduct for helping his son obtain authorization to own firearms three years before Robert Crimo III allegedly opened fire on Highland Park, Illinois, paradegoers should be a wake-up call to everyone: If you hear or see things about potential violence, you must alert the authorities. And if you do things that could potentially enable it, you will face legal consequences.

Crimo Jr. agreed earlier this month to plead guilty and was sentenced to 60 days in jail and two years on probation. He also will have to complete 100 hours of community service.

Prosecutors alleged that Crimo Jr. ignored signs that his son was a danger to himself and others yet signed for him to obtain a firearm owner's identification card, which is required to buy guns. Just months before the state permit was issued in 2019, a family member contacted the authorities and said Crimo III had threatened to "kill everyone." Police removed 16 knives, a dagger and a sword from the home in response to that but did not make any arrest.

After that incident, Crimo III bought several guns, including a high-powered rifle that prosecutors say he used in a mass shooting during Highland Park's July Fourth parade in 2022, killing seven and wounding dozens more.

While prosecutions against family members of mass shooting suspects are rare, the case against Crimo Jr. is not exactly an outlier. James and Jennifer Crumbley, the parents of a school shooter in Oxford Township, Michigan, are awaiting trial for their alleged roles in

the slayings of four students by their son in 2021. The Crumbleys are facing involuntary manslaughter charges that they have fought and failed to get dismissed. Their final appeal was to the Michigan Supreme Court, which decided in October not to hear their case. If convicted, each parent faces up to 15 years in prison.

Their son, Ethan Crumbley, pleaded guilty last year to killing his classmates at Oxford High School. His parents are accused of ignoring their troubled son, who was just 15 years old, and instead of getting him help, they allegedly bought him a gun as an early Christmas present in 2021, just days before he went on a shooting spree.

Obviously, the Crumbleys have the presumption of innocence for now, but the fact that they face trial is a good sign and should put parents everywhere on notice. Accountability is an important safety net for all communities.

Parents should make sure they do not enable things like this and have to speak up. Notably, even people speaking up about seeing or hearing something alarming it is not guaranteed to stop a determined shooter.

After a 40-year-old man, Robert Card, killed 18 people and wounded 13 others during a shooting spree at two locations in Lewiston, Maine, last month, it was reported that authorities were told of warning signs but may have dropped the ball.

According to reports, in the months before the Oct. 25 shootings, Card told friends or relatives that he was hearing voices and planning violence and that he demonstrated alarming behavior. Family

By **JEFFERY M. LEVING**

Chicago Tribune



Attorney Jeffery M. Leving has dedicated his career to safeguarding children and reuniting them with their fathers. He has written three acclaimed books: Fathers' Rights, Divorce Wars, and How to be a Good Divorced Dad. He also is a recipient of a 2023 Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award presented by President Joe Biden.

members and colleagues in his Army Reserve unit did the right thing and alerted the authorities, including the Sagadahoc County sheriff's office and the Army, but not enough was done.

That case is still under investigation, and if the courts determine some people should be held accountable, I hope it will serve as another wake-up call. At the very least, it sounds as though different agencies need to communicate more effectively with each other so that another high-risk person doesn't slip through the cracks.

For parents, friends and colleagues, the simple mandate still applies, perhaps now more than ever: If you hear or see something, say something. And if agencies receive reports from someone's parents, friends or colleagues of a potential threat, they should follow through to ensure potential shooters are not overlooked. Too many lives depend on it.

The Grinch continues to steal hearts at Christmas

In December 1966, the CBS special "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" premiered. At the time, it was "the most expensive half-hour ever put on TV" due to animation costs, music and narration.

It was inspired casting that Boris Karloff, star of 1931's "Frankenstein," would provide the voice of the Grinch. The artists may have also sketched features of Karloff's face onto the Grinch's face. There seems to be an odd resemblance.

What would the Grinch sound like? Boris Karloff, of course. A 1966 TV reviewer wrote: "Who is to doubt that a man so akin to the metaphysical world as Karloff knows what a Grinch's voice is like?"

To the delight of fans, Karloff will forever be the face and voice of Dr. Frankenstein's monster and Dr. Seuss's Grinch. Karloff considered himself "lucky" that he had these roles.

For the last 57 years, the Grinch has continued to steal Christmas, to the delight of young and old. The Grinch returns for Christmas 2023!

"How the Grinch Stole Christmas" tells the story of a mean green character with a tiny heart who does not want Christmas to arrive. He dresses as Santa and with a sled driven by his dog, steals Christmas presents and decorations from the Whos in

Whoville. On Christmas morning, the Grinch marvels as the Whos still celebrate Christmas. It is a heart-changing experience for the Grinch. The program is a joyful annual holiday experience for all.

At the 1967 Grammy Awards, the Song and Record of the Year was "Up, Up, and Away" by the Fifth Dimension. The album of the year was "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" by The Beatles. The Grammy for Best Recording for Children went to 78-year-old Boris Karloff for narrating "Dr. Seuss: How The Grinch Stole Christmas." Karloff died in 1969.

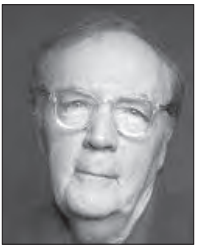
Karloff's daughter Sara told me that the Grammy was the only major award that her father won. I suspect that if kids and adult fans were allowed to vote in the Emmys or Academy Awards, they likely would have given both awards to Boris Karloff.

Karloff's 1931 performance in "Frankenstein" made him internationally famous for the rest of his life. Halloween would not be the same without a screening of the film. Kids and adults wearing Frankenstein masks for Halloween is an American tradition. Karloff is with us every October.

In December, Karloff will also be with us as the Grinch. Christmas cards with images of the Grinch are popular with kids and adults. Sara Karloff said she has written "Merry Ginchmas" on in-

By **JAMES PATTERSON**

Tribune News Service



James Patterson is an American author. He wrote this for InsideSources.com.

numerable holiday cards for kids and other lovers of her father's Grammy Award-winning voice work. This Christmas will be no different, she said.

On a historical note, "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" was a 1966 CBS TV Special. It was initially broadcast on Sunday, Dec. 18 at 7 p.m. Eastern. It pre-empted the popular audience favorite "Lassie." The Grinch had fierce competition from ABC's hourlong episode of underwater drama "Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea." That evening's episode, "The Brand of the Beast," had a werewolf onboard the submarine.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A disconnected people

The people of the CNMI are extremely disconnected from the actual activities and ownership in our government, as things are just being left-up to the powers-that-be without any form of input or protest by the people. There was a time when public hearings really meant something in the CNMI, but since the casino was forced down our throats without any form of public accountability, it has now become a common practice to avoid all public hearings, creating an extremely dangerous and detrimental practice in which people pay the cost. People no longer have a real say in the important issues that adversely affect our quality of life. The Legislature is trying to raise money that adversely affects people without giving people any say, other than the public comment section that virtually no one knows about in time before a bill is passed into law.

There was a protest for the Palestinian people on Capital Hill that I applaud, but it made me wonder why there has never been a protest over the \$77 million owed the people by IPI. That is enough money to put thousands in many households of the CNMI. Why hasn't the Casino Commission conducted some

form of a public hearing to address this enormous amount of money that only Ambrose M. Bennett is asking about? The CNMI government and the people combined are owed enough money by IPI to have a big portion of the stock and control of IPI but the CC is fumbling around with collecting money that IPI doesn't have and even extending this mess for years into our future. People are clearly being overlooked and totally disconnected from their contract with IPI. It is one of the most horrific things I have seen since the casino was forced on people without a public hearing after people have already rejected it twice. Heck, I even told them so and even pleaded in more than one letter to the editor to give the exclusive casino contract to a Japanese investor. That would have benefited our Japanese tourist market. Instead, they ran the Japanese tourists away by betraying them for the Chinese—as I predicted. We need to try to find Japanese investors and convince them to buy-in (our stock) and finish the project and even transform the casino into a convention center that can entice large groups of Japanese tourists to visit the CNMI and even a place for big local events.

Ambrose M. Bennett
Kagman III, Saipan

ISRAELIS

From page 10






Aviva Sigal, a kindergarten teacher, mother of four and grandmother of five. Sigal's sister, Sandy Feldman, was one of our guests along with her husband, Ilan. However, Sigal's husband, Keith, is still being held hostage by Hamas.

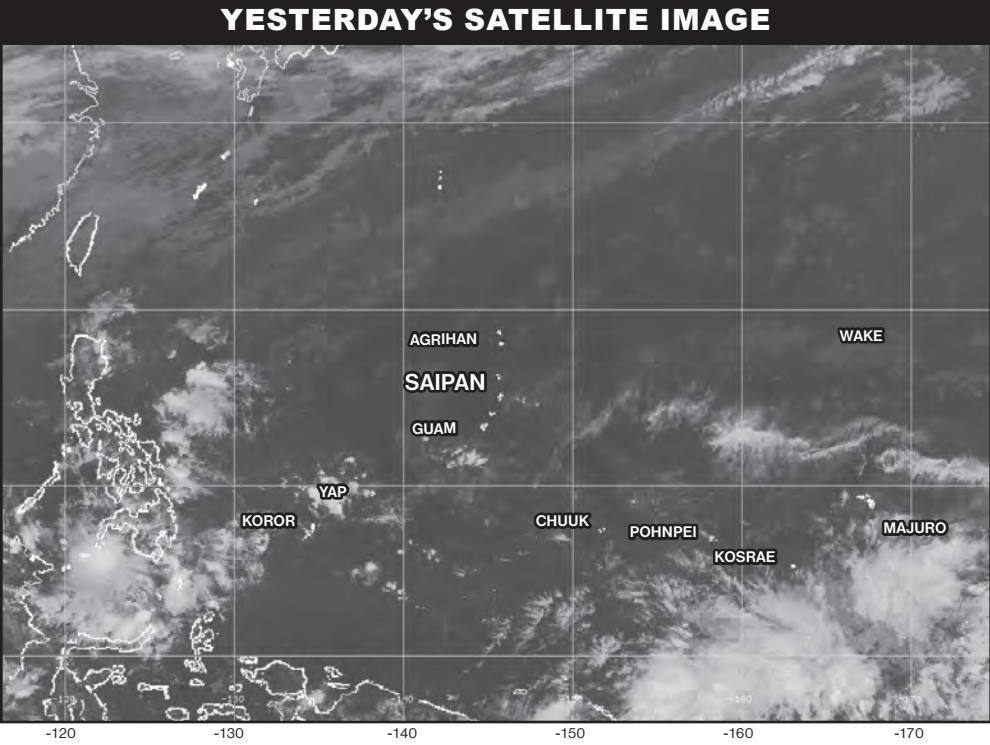
The couple were taken to Gaza (in their own car) by Hamas at the Kfar Aza kibbutz where Israeli authorities have said more than 100 residents were butchered, decimating a community taken by surprise and turning it into little more than a collection of corpses. On Oct. 10, the BBC reported that "soldiers removing the bodies walked carefully through the ruins of houses, wary of unexploded ordnance, that might also be booby-trapped."

Sigal is a two-time survivor, both of the initial massacre and her time in captivity.

We are deeply glad for Feldman that her sister has come home and hope all our other guests, all the other terrified family members, get similar good news soon.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN									
TODAY		SATURDAY		SUNDAY		MONDAY		TUESDAY	
									
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.		Partly sunny with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.		Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.		Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.		Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	
88	78°	87	78°	87	78°	87	78°	87	78°



PICTURE TIME: 7:28 AM, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2023

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Guam Doppler weather radar shows scattered showers south and west of Guam moving away from the Marianas, with drier weather moving in. The buoys reveal combined seas of 7 to 9 feet, composed of a large trade-wind swell and smaller wind waves.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: <https://www.weather.gov/gum/>

MICRONESIA			▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy	90° / 81°	
Palau	Showers	87° / 80°	
Yap	Mostly Cloudy	87° / 89°	
Chuuk	Partly Cloudy	89° / 81°	
Pohnpei	Cloudy	90° / 79°	
Kosrae	Cloudy	85° / 78°	
Majuro	Cloudy	85° / 83°	

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:26 AM	5:44 PM
Saturday	6:27 AM	5:44 PM
Sunday	6:27 AM	5:45 PM
Monday	6:28 AM	5:45 PM
Tuesday	6:29 AM	5:45 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	9:46 AM	9:10 PM
Saturday	-	10:34 AM	10:03 PM
Sunday	-	11:16 AM	10:54 PM
Monday	-	11:54 AM	11:42 PM
Tuesday	-	12:29 PM	-

AROUND THE GLOBE			▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Partly Sunny	69° / 59°	
Beijing	Fair	35° / 21°	
Hong Kong	Fair	77° / 69°	
Honolulu	Cloudy	77° / 70°	
London	Fair	43° / 31°	
Los Angeles	Partly Cloudy	51° / 40°	
Manila	Mostly Cloudy	92° / 80°	
Melbourne	Rain	66° / 58°	
Miami	Clear	74° / 59°	
New York	Cloudy	37° / 28°	
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	58° / 52°	
Paris	Cloudy	46° / 36°	
Busan	Partly Cloudy	53° / 36°	
Rome	Clear	60° / 40°	
Salem	Clear	56° / 31°	
San Francisco	Clear	61° / 50°	
Seoul	Sunny	37° / 19°	
Tokyo	Fair	63° / 48°	
Washington, DC	Fair	40° / 24°	

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY			FEET
4:00 AM	Low Tide	-0.50	
11:39 AM	High Tide	1.64	
4:58 PM	Low Tide	1.20	
8:52 PM	High Tide	1.50	

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF OCTOBER 30, 2023							
DEPARTURES				ARRIVALS			
SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)				GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN			
UA076	9:50AM	10:30AM	Daily	UA174	8:00AM	8:45AM	Daily
SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)				NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN			
UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5	UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7
GUAM-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-GUAM			
PR 111	5:55AM	7:55AM	Daily	UA189	00:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6
UA193	7:50PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau	PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA183	7:55PM	9:50PM	Daily	UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
				UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7
SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN			
7C3403/2305	4:40AM	10:20PM	Daily	UA189/174	00:40AM	8:45AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
UA076/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam	UA192/174	10:40PM	8:45AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
UA076/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau	UA184/174	10:55PM	8:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via Guam
				7C2306/3406	11:15PM	3:30PM+1	Daily
SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)				INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN			
TW308	2:15AM	6:10AM	Daily	7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
7C3403	4:40AM	8:35AM	Daily	TW307	7:45PM	1:15AM+1	Daily
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily	7C3404	10:15PM	3:35AM+1	Daily
LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. <i>(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)</i>							

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.									
FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF OCTOBER 30, 2023									
SAIPAN TO ROTA									
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY				
1301	SAIPAN	ROTA	08:30	09:00	Oct 21-31, 2023				
1302	SAIPAN	ROTA	10:30	11:00	Daily				
1303	SAIPAN	ROTA	15:30	16:00	Daily				
ROTA TO SAIPAN									
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY				
3101	ROTA	SAIPAN	9:30	10:00	Oct 21-31, 2023				
3102	ROTA	SAIPAN	11:30	12:00	Saturday & Sunday				
3103	ROTA	SAIPAN	13:30	14:00	Monday To Friday				
3104	ROTA	SAIPAN	16:30	17:00	Daily				
ROTA TO GUAM									
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY				
3401	ROTA	GUAM	11:30	12:00	Monday To Friday				
GUAM TO ROTA									
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY				
4301	GUAM	ROTA	12:30	13:00	Monday To Friday				
SAIPAN TO TINIAN									
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY				
1201	SAIPAN	TINIAN	7:30	7:45	Daily				
1202	SAIPAN	TINIAN	8:00	8:15	Daily				
1203	SAIPAN	TINIAN	9:00	9:15	Daily				
1204	SAIPAN	TINIAN	10:00	10:15	Daily				
1206	SAIPAN	TINIAN	15:00	15:15	Daily				
1207	SAIPAN	TINIAN	16:00	16:15	Daily				
1208	SAIPAN	TINIAN	17:00	17:15	Daily				
TINIAN TO SAIPAN									
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY				
2101	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:00	8:15	Daily				
2102	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:30	8:45	Daily				
2103	TINIAN	SAIPAN	9:30	9:45	Daily				
2104	TINIAN	SAIPAN	10:30	10:45	Daily				
2106	TINIAN	SAIPAN	15:30	15:45	Daily				
2107	TINIAN	SAIPAN	16:30	16:45	Daily				
2108	TINIAN	SAIPAN	17:30	17:45	Daily				

NOAA Fisheries proposes critical habitat for 5 Indo-Pacific corals

» Critical habitat proposed around 16 islands and atolls in US Pacific Islands

NOAA Fisheries recently announced a proposed rule to designate critical habitat for five threatened reef-building coral species in the Pacific Islands region. This rule refines an earlier proposal in 2020 for Endangered Species Act-listed Indo-Pacific coral species following the inclusion of new data and information received from the community during the previous public comment period.

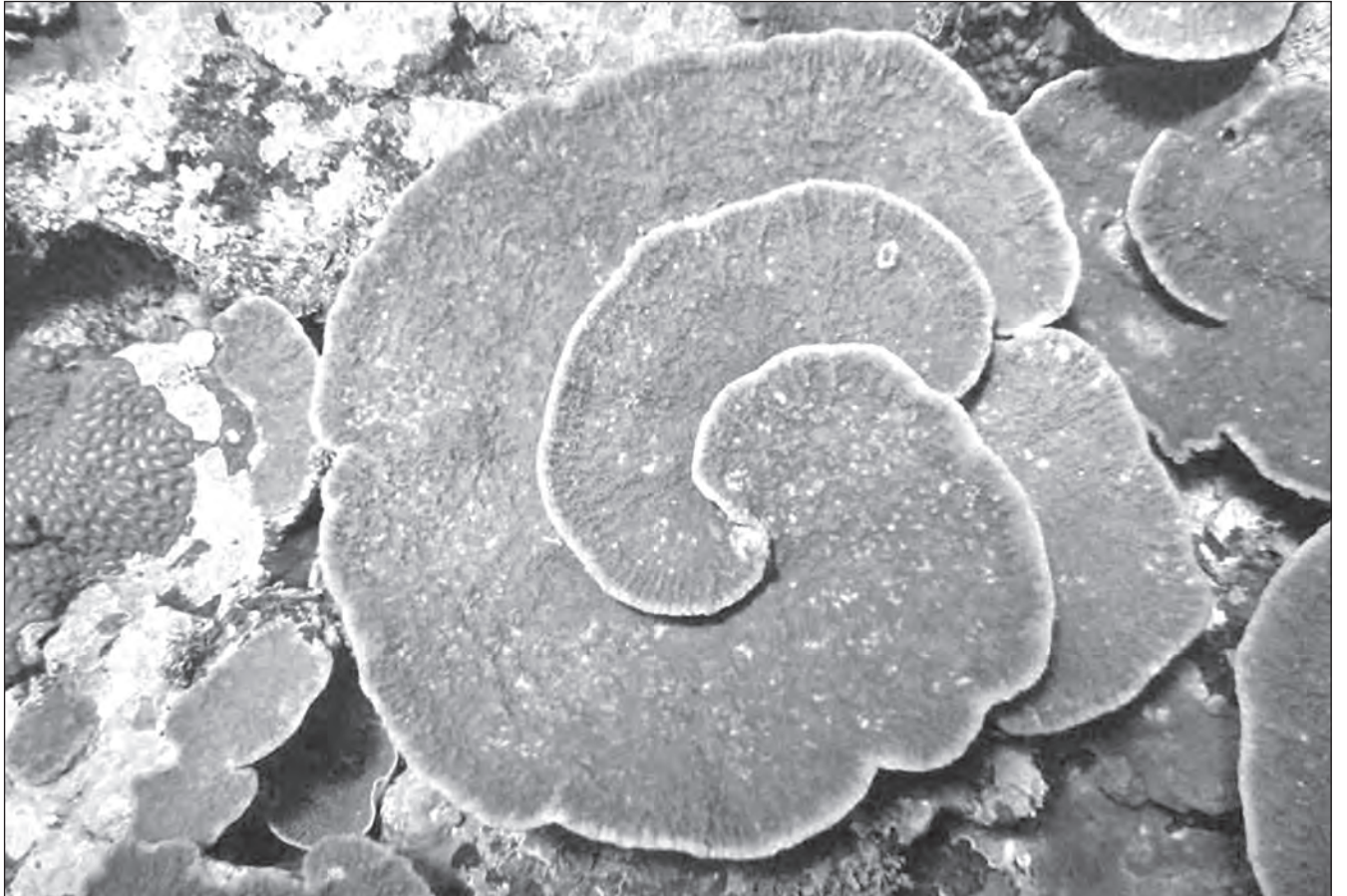
“Pacific coral reefs play an important role in shoreline protection, while also supporting the local economy and serving as biodiverse ecosystems,” said Dawn Golden, Assistant Regional Administrator for NOAA Fisheries Pacific

Islands Regional Office. “Despite facing threats—including temperature rise and pollution — designating critical habitat aims to minimize the impacts of these threats and promote coral resilience.”

Under the ESA, NOAA Fisheries is proposing to designate areas containing habitat characteristics where *Acropora globiceps*, *A. retusa*, *A. speciosa*, *Euphyllia paradivisa*, and *Isopora crateriformis* reproduce, disperse, settle and mature. These include select locations in the waters around 16 islands and atolls:

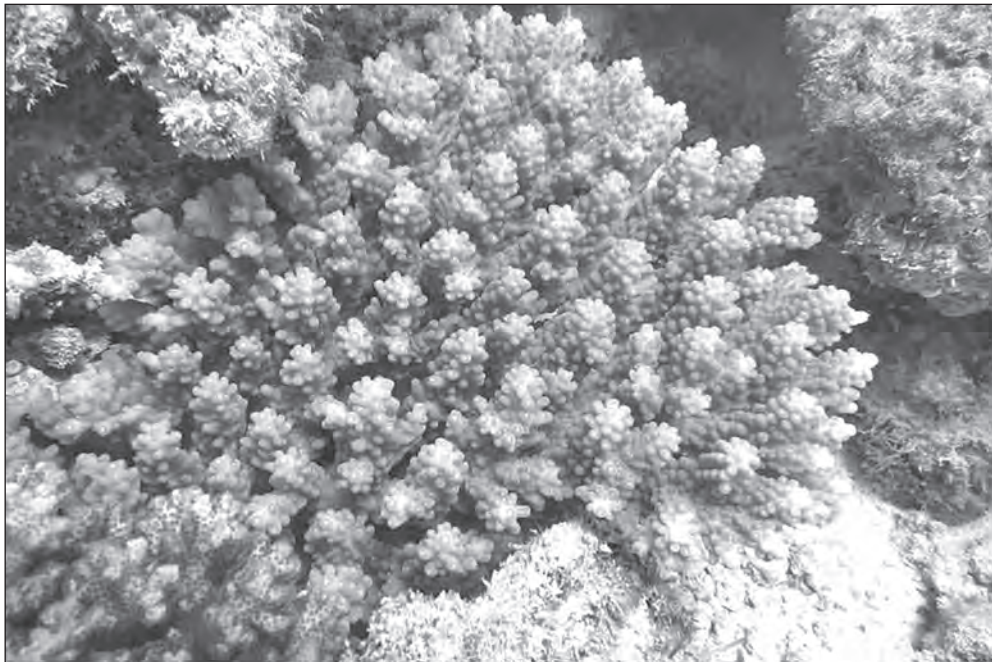
■ American Samoa—Ofu-Olosega; Tutuila and Ta‘u in the National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa; and Rose Atoll, in the Rose Atoll Marine National Monument and the National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa

■ Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands—Rota; Aguijan; Tinian; Saipan;



DOUG FENNER

Isopora crateriformis coral.



DOUG FENNER

Acropora retusa.

Alamagan; Pagan; and Maug Islands and Uracas in the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument

■ Guam

■ Northwestern Hawaiian Islands—Lalo (French Frigate Shoals) in Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument

■ Pacific Remote Islands Area—Palmyra and Johnston Atolls in the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument

The depth range of the proposed critical habitat depends on the occurrence of specific coral species with a minimum range of 0-10 m (0-33 ft) and maximum

range of 0-50 m (0-164 ft).

If finalized, the designation would not create any new regulations or restrictions on fisheries. Only federal agencies are directly affected by a critical habitat designation; non-federal entities may be affected if their activities involve federal funding, permitting or authorization.

“Our team at the NOAA Fisheries Pacific Island Regional Office is appreciative of the feedback from the territories and the local communities. Their involvement and input led to the refinement of the proposed rule,” added Golden. “This new proposal is a reflection of their valuable data and

input throughout this process.”

Following the feedback received during the public comment period for the proposed critical habitat made in 2020, the changes in this proposed rule include: the removal of two species and four islands for consideration, the addition of three islands and more specific mapping of critical habitat.

Comments on the proposed rule can be submitted Nov. 30, 2023, through Feb. 28, 2024. Submit comments online at www.regulations.gov, under docket number NOAA-NMFS-2016-0131 for the proposed critical habitat. (NOAA)

Scientists caution vs unintended repercussions of unnecessary fishing regulations in US PRI

HONOLULU—Science advisors to the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council expressed deep concerns at their meeting this week about the potential negative unintended consequences of adding more fishing limits in the U.S. Pacific Remote Islands, or PRI.

The council’s Scientific and Statistical Committee was tasked with evaluating current fishing regulations in the PRI, commenting on their comprehensiveness and assessing the scientific justification for more regulations. SSC members reaffirmed their recommendation from the September meeting that existing regulations are sufficient to meet the goals and objectives of the proposed PRI National Marine Sanctuary. The SSC found no scientific evidence to support additional fishing regulations and cautioned further limits on the U.S. fleet could have negative

impacts on the region.

“The burden of conservation will continue to fall on the shoulders of the Pacific Island communities, and additional regulations may limit future economic opportunities,” said SSC member Debra Cabrera, University of Guam.

“I would not like to see any interruptions to ongoing data collection efforts in the area like biosampling and tagging that is dependent on the fishery,” added SSC member David Itano, fisheries consultant.

SSC member Steve Martell, Sea State Inc., noted “further restrictions could displace fleets into areas that may have higher bycatch rates or limits, thereby causing a larger adverse effect on protected species populations.”

The NOAA Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center published a technical memorandum this month estimating

the economic contributions of U.S. commercial fisheries to American Samoa. The report documents that hundreds of millions of dollars and thousands of jobs are directly or indirectly supported by commercial fisheries. SSC members emphasized a loss of fish supplying the cannery could be devastating, and closing waters from 50-200 nm will only further disadvantage the U.S. fleet that is already on shaky footing.

SSC members had significant concerns about the equity and environmental justice implications that the proposed sanctuary and existing marine national monuments impose on the underserved community of American Samoa and the broader Pacific Islands Region.

“I’m not only worried about the lack of U.S. footprint in those waters and the risk of foreign fleet incursions, but

also the inequity in terms of Pacific Island communities who are disproportionately affected and bear the brunt of the impacts,” said SSC member Frank Camacho, UOG.

Another member noted there has been substantial outcry in American Samoa over the proposed sanctuary, which is viewed as a major threat to the economy. SSC Chair and general counsel Jim Lynch said, “Additional fishing regulations would be counterproductive to efforts to get better data from fishing communities that are disadvantaged and rely on subsistence or fisheries to make a living.”

The council recognizes the importance of striking a balance between conservation goals and the economic and cultural well-being of Pacific Island communities. The discussions underscore the need for careful consideration of

potential negative unintended consequences and the importance of data-driven decision-making. As required by the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the Council will continue to engage with stakeholders, evaluate scientific information, and collaborate with relevant agencies. This ensures any proposed fishing regulations for the PRI National Marine Sanctuary align with the best available science, promote sustainability, and take into account the unique circumstances of the region.

The SSC also discussed a revised timeline for the Guam bottomfish stock estimation. Before being used in fishery management, stock assessments undergo a peer review process known as a Western Pacific Stock Assessment Review. The WPSAR framework includes a schedule of intermediary update reviews,

adding years of data only, between benchmark reviews that incorporate significant changes to previous assessments, such as a new model type.

For the first time, PIFSC will hold a WPSAR in July 2024 to focus on reviewing existing data before incorporating the improved information into a benchmark stock assessment. The 2019 assessment, which found the Guam bottomfish stock to be overfished, but no overfishing was occurring, will be updated in February 2024 to provide a revised annual catch limit in the interim. The Western Pacific Region is fishery data-poor, which can impact model assessments. WPSAR is a cooperative effort between the Council and the National Marine Fisheries Service and includes SSC members as the Chair and/or reviewers on its panel. (PR)

Business

ON 43RD ANNIVERSARY

Hyatt champions local artists

Hyatt Regency Saipan will officially welcome the Christmas season by unveiling this year's theme "Tropical Christmas at Hyatt Regency Saipan" to be held at the main lobby tomorrow, Dec. 2, at 3pm.

Hyatt Regency Saipan is also celebrating its 43rd anniversary of service in the CNMI by highlighting local artists that decorated the first tropical Christmas tree.

With these milestones, Hyatt's commitment of care for guests, community and environment has also grown with the times. According to general manager Simon Graf, "As a global brand, Hyatt keeps increasing its care for the environment, its people, and responsible businesses. These elements have been fundamental in the way we operate. With the aim of creating a more conscious environment, respecting the culture and community, our Christmas tree will try to represent these pillars in a unique



Emanonipi

way" he said.

"In awareness of the annual, global Christmas industry in combination of our critical location among a sensitive ecosystem, we demonstrate



Warwick

a combination of celebrating the season with a unique center piece, made by local artisans," he added.

The Hyatt Regency Saipan Christmas Tree is hand-made, sourced from regional, natural materials by Saipan residents Tyler Warwick, and Albert Emanonipi with accessorized garlands by Pat Mareham.

According to Warwick, the tree was built and designed based on traditional Pacific architecture, and took nearly 50 coconut leaves to complete, harvested from the Northern part of Saipan. "The rest of the materials were locally sourced. No nails, metals, plastics nor electricity were used. After harvest, the leaves were woven into

panels and the pattern used was based on traditional coconut thatch," he said.



Mareham

Warwick and Emanonipi started from the bottom and worked their way up, layer by layer. The tree is supported by gagu wood or pine

tree wood and young bamboo wood was used to give the tree a round shape. What holds all the pieces of the tree together is approximately 100 yards of rope, lashed together. The hand-made 25-foot garland and accessories around the tree took Mareham seven days to complete and are all made out of coconut leaves.

Graf added "Hyatt's Tropical Christmas is made up of dedication and commitment by the people in the community—a true inspiration of culture, tradition and love."

Everyone is welcome to join when the tropical Christmas Tree is being unveiled at the Hyatt lobby on Dec. 2 at 3pm. There will be performances plus cutting of the traditional Hyatt birthday cake. (Hyatt)

OPEC+ suppliers struggle to agree on cuts to oil production

LONDON (AP)—The OPEC oil cartel led by Saudi Arabia and allied producers including Russia will try to agree Thursday on cuts to the amount of crude they send to the world, with prices having tumbled lately despite their efforts to prop them up.

That's been a good thing for U.S. drivers, who have been able to fill their gas tanks for less money in recent months and whose costs at the pump can be sensitive to moves by the OPEC+ coalition. But it's bad news for OPEC+ countries whose oil income props up their economies and who have faced setbacks in keeping prices up despite initial fears that the Israel-Hamas war could affect oil flows.

Now, they are struggling to come to a consensus on production cuts, analysts say. The group postponed its meeting originally set for Sunday by four days, indicating that a new agreement will prove to be challenging, said Jorge Leon, senior vice president of oil market research for Rystad Energy.

"Despite the challenges, we still expect OPEC+ to reach an agreement to reduce production," he said in an analyst note. That's because "every member country acknowledges the need to reduce output to support prices into 2024."

The question is how to split it among the 23 member countries, some of whom already accepted lower production targets at the last OPEC+ meeting in Vienna in June.

Another big question is whether Saudi Arabia and Russia will extend their additional voluntary cuts of 1 million barrels per day and 500,000 barrels per day, respectively, beyond this year into 2024.

Russia wants more oil revenue as it faces Western sanctions but seeks to pour energy earnings into its war chest against Ukraine. The Saudis have to earn nearly \$86 per barrel to meet their planned spending goals, according to the latest estimate from the International Monetary Fund.

The Saudis are trying to fund an ambitious overhaul of the kingdom's economy, reduce its dependence on oil and create jobs for a young population.

But the international benchmark Brent crude has stayed in the low- to mid-\$80 range in recent weeks, reflecting concerns about oversupply in a weakening global economy, which could weigh on the thirst for oil for travel and industry.

Early Thursday, Brent rose 8 cents to \$82.96 a barrel, while U.S. crude rose by 11 cents to \$77.97 a barrel in electronic

trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange.

Lower oil prices have allowed U.S. gas prices to fall or stay steady since Sept. 19, AAA said. Gas is averaging just below \$3.25 a gallon, the motor club said, down about 7% from a month ago.

But that's still higher than when President Joe Biden took office in January 2021, when prices were averaging about \$2.40 a gallon. High inflation has been a political challenge for Biden going into the 2024 election, prompting him to say Monday that efforts to improve supply chains and reduce price pressures are a priority.

White House national security spokesman John Kirby declined to address the possibility of OPEC+ reducing oil production.

"The president is going to keep focusing, as he has been, on a healthy global market that's properly balanced and that can continue to bring the price of gasoline down here in the United States," Kirby told reporters at a briefing Monday.

U.S. oil production has hit records as OPEC+ has cut back, with producers outside the group expected to keep leading global growth in oil supply next year, the International Energy Agency said in its November oil report.

Nation

Henry Kissinger dies at 100

WASHINGTON (AP)—Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, the diplomat with the thick glasses and gravelly voice who dominated foreign policy as the United States extricated itself from Vietnam and broke down barriers with China, died Wednesday, his consulting firm said. He was 100.



Kissinger

With his gruff yet commanding presence and behind-the-scenes manipulation of power, Kissinger exerted uncommon influence on global affairs under Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, earning both vilification and the Nobel Peace Prize. Decades later, his name still provoked impassioned debate over foreign policy landmarks long past.

Kissinger's power grew during the turmoil of Watergate, when the politically attuned diplomat assumed a role akin to co-president to the weakened Nixon.

"No doubt my vanity was piqued," Kissinger later wrote of his expanding influence. "But the dominant emotion was a premonition of catastrophe."

A Jew who fled Nazi Germany with his family in his teens, Kissinger in his later years cultivated the reputation of respected statesman, giving speeches, offering advice to

Republicans and Democrats alike and managing a global consulting business. He turned up in President Donald Trump's White House on multiple occasions. But Nixon-era documents and tapes, as they trickled out over the years, brought revelations—many in Kissinger's own words—that sometimes cast him in a harsh light.

Never without his detractors, Kissinger after he left government was dogged by critics who argued that he should be called to account for his policies on Southeast Asia and support of repressive regimes in Latin America.

For eight restless years—first as national security adviser, later as secretary of state, and for a time in the middle holding both titles—Kissinger ranged across the breadth of major foreign policy issues. He conducted the first "shuttle diplomacy" in the quest for Middle East peace. He used secret channels to pursue ties between the United States and China, ending decades of isolation and mutual hostility.

He initiated the Paris negotiations that ultimately provided a face-saving means—a "decent interval," he called it—to get the United States out of a costly war in Vietnam. Two years later, Saigon fell to the communists.

And he pursued a policy of detente with the Soviet Union that led to arms control agreements and raised the possibility that the tensions of the Cold War and its nuclear threat did not have to last forever.

At age 99, he was still out on tour for his book on leadership. Asked in July 2022 interview with ABC whether he wished he could take back any of his decisions, Kissinger demurred, saying: "I've been thinking about these problems all my life. It's my hobby as well as my occupation. And so the recommendations I made were the best of which I was then capable."

Even then, he had mixed thoughts on Nixon's record, saying "his foreign policy has held up and he was quite effective in domestic policy" while allowing that the disgraced president had "permitted himself to be involved in a number of steps that were inappropriate for a president."

As Kissinger turned 100 in May 2023, his son David wrote in The Washington Post that his father's centenary "might have an air of inevitability for anyone familiar with his force of character and love of historical symbolism. Not only has he outlived most of his peers, eminent detractors and students, but he has also remained indefatigably active throughout his 90s."

Senator: White House not seeking conditions on military aid to Israel

WASHINGTON (AP)—National security adviser Jake Sullivan told lawmakers this week that the White House is not seeking to place conditions on U.S. military assistance to Israel, days after President Joe Biden signaled openness to the notion that was being pushed by some Democrats as the civilian death toll in Gaza from Israel's war against Hamas climbed.

Sen. Chris Van Hollen, who was among the senators who met privately with Sullivan on Tuesday, told The Associated Press on Wednesday that Sullivan "made it clear that the White House is not asking for any conditionality in aid.

So I want to leave that very clear." A second person directly familiar with the meeting confirmed the account.

Sullivan met with about a dozen Democratic senators to discuss their questions about

how the administration would ensure that any U.S. weapons provided to Israel are used in accord with U.S. law. The meeting was held via a teleconference in which Sullivan was at the White House and senators were in a classified room on Capitol Hill. It came as some progressive lawmakers concerned about the civilian toll have suggested that the U.S. place conditions on the types of military assistance and how it could be used by Israeli forces against Hamas targets.

Last week, Biden told reporters that conditioning military aid to Israel was a "worthwhile thought." But he suggested that had he done so earlier, it would have been more difficult to secure the release of hostages held by Hamas.

Van Hollen, who has been one of the most vocal sena-

tors raising concerns about the humanitarian situation in Gaza, also noted that Biden has been pushing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in private, noting to him the rising humanitarian concerns among lawmakers who would otherwise be allies of Israel.

"The fact is that the president — in his conversations with the prime minister — has pointed to the fact that lots of friends of Israel on Capitol Hill are very concerned about the very high, unacceptably high levels of civilian casualties and the lack of more cooperation on the provision of humanitarian aid," Van Hollen said. "So our concerns have been communicated and useful, I think, to the president."

Van Hollen, D-Md., had spearheaded a letter signed by a majority of Senate Democrats earlier this month asking the administration how it would ensure Israel's use of weaponry complied with American law.

Asia

S. Koreans want their own nukes

CHEORWON, South Korea (AP)—To the steady rat-tat-tat of machine guns and exploding bursts of smoke, amphibious tanks slice across a lake not far from the big green mountains that stand along the world's most heavily armed border.

Dozens of South Korean and U.S. combat engineers build a pontoon bridge to ferry tanks and armored vehicles across the water, all within easy range of North Korean artillery.

For seven decades, the allies have staged annual drills like this recent one to deter aggression from North Korea, whose 1950 surprise invasion of South Korea started a war that has technically yet to end.

The alliance with the United States has allowed South Korea to build a powerful democracy, its citizens confident that Washington would protect them if Pyongyang ever acted on its dream of unifying the Korean Peninsula under its own rule.

Until now.

With dozens of nukes in North Korea's burgeoning arsenal, repeated threats to launch them at its enemies, and a stream of tests of powerful missiles designed to pinpoint target a U.S. city with a nuclear strike, a growing number of South Koreans are losing faith in America's vow to back its longtime ally.

The fear is this: That a U.S. president would hesitate to use nuclear weapons to defend the South from a North Korean attack knowing that Pyongyang could kill millions of Americans with atomic retaliation.

Frequent polls show a strong majority of South Koreans—between 70% and 80% in some surveys—support their nation

acquiring atomic weapons or urging Washington to bring back the tactical nuclear weapons it removed from the South in the early 1990s.

It reflects a surprising erosion of trust between nations that like to call their alliance an unshakable cornerstone of America's military presence in the region.

"I think one day they can abandon us and go their own way if that better serves their national interests," Kim Bang-rak, a 76-year-old security guard in Seoul, said of the United States. "If North Korea bombs us, we should bomb them equally in retaliation, so it would be better for us to have nukes."

Underscoring those fears: Just hours before the U.S.-South Korean tank drills began in Cheorwon, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un oversaw two ballistic missile test launches meant to simulate "scorched earth" nuclear strikes on South Korean command centers and airfields.

At the heart of South Korean unease is a broader debate over who gets to have nuclear weapons, a question that has anguished nations since two U.S. nuclear bombs flattened Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

The sharp rise in support for South Korean nuclear weapons is not occurring in a vacuum. Nonproliferation experts say a vibrant global nuclear arms race shows little sign of slowing.

Nine countries—the United States, Russia, Britain, France, China, India, Pakistan, North Korea and Israel—spent nearly \$83 billion in 2022 on nuclear weapons, according to a recent report by the International

Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. That's an increase of \$2.5 billion from 2021, with the United States alone spending \$43.7 billion.

How South Korea deals with the nuclear question could have major implications for Asia's future, potentially jeopardizing the U.S.-South Korean alliance and threatening a delicate nuclear balance that has so far kept an uneasy peace in a dangerous region.

Ironclad. That's how the United States has long described its commitment to South Korea should a war begin. U.S. officials are adamant that any attack on Seoul by North Korea's 1.2 million-member military would be met with an overwhelming response.

The United States, bound by treaty to defend Seoul and Tokyo, stations 28,500 troops in South Korea and another 56,000 in Japan. Tens of thousands of Americans live in greater Seoul, a sprawling area of 24 million people about an hour's drive from the inter-Korean border.

"The ironclad commitment is not just words; it's a reality. We've got thousands of troops right there," Gen. Mark Milley, who was then the top U.S. military officer, recently told reporters in Tokyo. An attack, said the now-retired Milley, "would spell the end of North Korea."

Asked about the South Korean public's support for creating its own nuclear force, Milley said, "The United States would prefer nonproliferation of nuclear weapons. We think they're inherently dangerous, obviously. And we have extended our nuclear umbrella to both Japan and South Korea."

another set of graft charges, related to his seven-year sentence for failing to disclose how his family set up a steel mills in 1999. Sharif, who had appealed the first graft conviction last week, was in court on Wednesday and welcomed the ruling. "I am grateful ... God has made us victorious today," he said.

US Air Force Osprey crashes off Japan during training, killing at least one of eight on board

TOKYO (AP)—A U.S. Air Force Osprey based in Japan crashed during a training mission Wednesday off of the country's southern coast, killing at least one of the eight crew members, the Japanese coast guard said. The cause of the crash and the status of the seven others on board were

not immediately known, Japanese coast guard spokesperson Kazuo Ogawa said. The Osprey is a hybrid aircraft that takes off and lands like a helicopter, but during flight it can rotate its propellers forward and cruise much faster like an airplane. Ospreys have had a number of accidents in the past, including in Japan, where they are deployed at U.S. and Japanese military bases. In Okinawa, where about half of the 50,000 American troops are based, Gov. Denny Tamaki told reporters Wednesday that he would ask the U.S. military to suspend all Osprey flights in Japan. Ogawa said the coast guard received an emergency call Wednesday afternoon from a fishing boat near the crash site off Yakushima, an island south of Kagoshima on the southern main island of Kyushu.

World

Truce in Israel-Hamas war extended by a day



A woman smiles as she is welcomed after being released from prison by Israel, in the West Bank town of Ramallah, early Thursday, Nov. 30, 2023. AP

JERUSALEM (AP)—Israel and Hamas on Thursday agreed to extend a temporary truce by another day minutes before it was set to expire, said Qatar, which has been mediating between the two sides.

Negotiations on extending it came down to the wire, with last-minute disagreements over the hostages to be freed by Hamas in exchange for another day of a halt in fighting.

Word of the extension came just as the truce was to expire at 7 a.m. (0500 GMT) Thursday. The Qatari Foreign Ministry said the truce was being extended under the same terms as in the past, under which Hamas has released 10 Israeli hostages per day in exchange for the release of 30 Palestinian prisoners.

The announcement followed a last-minute standoff earlier Thursday, with Hamas

saying Israel had rejected a proposed list that included seven living captives and the remains of three who the group said were killed in previous Israeli airstrikes. Israel later said Hamas submitted an improved list, paving the way for the extension.

Negotiators had been working into Thursday to hammer out details for a further extension of the truce. The expectation had been to extend the pause in fighting for at least another day or two, with the focus on releasing women and children.

The talks appear to be growing tougher as most of the women and children held by Hamas are freed, as the militants are expected to seek greater releases in return for freeing men and soldiers.

International pressure has mounted for the cease-fire to

continue as long as possible after nearly eight weeks of Israeli bombardment and a ground campaign in Gaza that has killed thousands of Palestinians, uprooted three quarters of the population of 2.3 million and led to a humanitarian crisis. Israel has welcomed the release of dozens of hostages in recent days and says it will maintain the truce if Hamas keeps freeing captives.

Still, Netanyahu underscored on Wednesday that Israel will resume its campaign to eliminate Hamas, which has ruled Gaza for 16 years and orchestrated the deadly attack on Israel that triggered the war.

"After this phase of returning our abductees is exhausted, will Israel return to fighting? So my answer is an unequivocal yes," he said. "There is no way we are not going back to fighting until the end."

Ukraine insists it sees no sign of NATO war fatigue

BRUSSELS (AP)—Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba insisted on Wednesday that NATO allies are showing no sign of war fatigue and remain committed to helping Ukraine defend itself against Russia and take back occupied territory.

Speaking to The Associated Press, Kuleba also said that President Vladimir Putin is miscalculating if he sees any value in keeping his forces in Ukraine at least until presidential elections in the United States in a year's time, which could usher in a new administration.

"I heard a clear 'no' to any reference to fatigue, and I heard (a) clear 'yes' to increased support to Ukraine," Kuleba said after meeting NATO counter-

parts in Brussels. He said that some allies had made fresh offers of support, but he declined to provide details.

"They understand that in order for them to feel safe, in order for them not to end up in a situation where NATO's soldiers will have to fight, Ukraine has to win in this war," Kuleba said.

More than 650 days into the war, fighting between Russia and Ukraine has bogged down, with neither able to make significant gains. NATO believes that Russia has suffered around 300,000 casualties, but officials decline to speculate about the toll on Ukraine.

NATO as an organization does not provide military assistance to Ukraine, even though many members do on an in-

dividual basis and in groups. But supplying ammunition and equipment has become a challenge as national weapons stocks dwindle.

And the rhetoric has shifted. Six weeks ago, top NATO officials and ministers praised the slow but incremental gains that Ukraine's armed forces were making. This week, the country's mere survival was being hailed as a victory.

Still, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the allies are "determined to make sure that Ukraine has what it needs, including to take back territory." He said many NATO members want "to help Ukraine build a future force that can ensure deterrence, and ensure defense against aggression going forward."

ASIAN BRIEFS

Pakistan acquits ex-Premier Nawaz Sharif in a graft case

ISLAMABAD (AP)—A Pakistani court acquitted former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in a graft case on Wednesday, removing a major obstacle for him to run in parliamentary elections in February. The Islamabad High Court's decision comes weeks after it restored Sharif's right to appeal a 2018 conviction in a case relating to the purchase of luxury apartments in London. Sharif, who served as prime minister three times, returned to Pakistan in October, after four years of self-exile abroad to avoid serving out a 10-year prison sentence on corruption charges. Sharif's acquittal leaves only one more legal hurdle standing between him and an election run. He also needs to be acquitted on

Off the Wall

Woman's decades-old mosaic yard art work may have to go



AP

Iris Logan takes a break from dismantling her boulevard rock garden in front of her Sherburne Ave. home in St. Paul, Minn., on Friday, Nov. 24, 2023.

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP)—Iris Logan was having a hard time growing grass in the front yard of her St. Paul, Minnesota, home, so she covered the space with stones, statues and decorative art. More than 30 years later, it's something of a local landmark.

But to a city inspector, it's a nuisance. Logan, 70, has been given notice to clean up the "planters, wood, metal cans, large rocks and miscellaneous debris" cited after a recent inspection, the St. Paul Pioneer Press reported. The City Council will take up the matter Dec. 6.

Logan says the city's actions forced her to create the mosaic in the first place because workers on a road repair project dug so deep around one of her trees

that its roots were exposed. She brought in bricks and dirt, planted flowers and added stones—and just kept adding.

"I'm a rock lover," said Logan, a former cotton sharecropper from Mississippi. "I'm not going to lie. If I see a rock I like, I try and roll it in my car on a two-by-four."

Logan recently received written notice that a city official will recommend to the City Council that she be given until Dec. 22 to clean things up. She appealed the order in careful handwriting that filled six pages of a short spiral notebook. The stones don't extend into the street or impede plow trucks or other city vehicles, Logan wrote in addressing one of the inspector's concerns.

"I just want to make a stand for the next person," said Logan, interrupted by a supportive honk and wave from a neighbor driving by.

Casey Rodriguez, a spokesman for the St. Paul Department of Safety and Inspections, said about 16 other properties on the same avenue also received letters advising them to remove obstructions to comply with city code.

"Generally boulevards should be clear of installations or obstructions (benches, large rocks, etc.) that would impede access to buried utility lines. This also keeps the tree roots clear and provides a place to shovel snow in the winter," Rodriguez said in an email to the Pioneer Press.

Rutt the moose is on the loose; a herd of fans are tracking him

A herd of followers are tracking a moose on the loose in southern Minnesota, hoping the majestic animal's journey ends safely after it was spotted Tuesday 140 miles (225 km) northwest of Minneapolis.

Fans have been tracking the young male moose for weeks and posting updates on a Facebook page that as

of Tuesday had more than 18,000 followers.

Admirers call the animal "Bullwinkle" or "Rutt," the latter in homage to a scatterbrained moose from the movie "Brother Bear."

A Minnesota Department of Natural Resources big game expert told the Minnesota Star Tribune that moose

typically only roam in northern Minnesota, making the now-famous moose's visit to south and central Minnesota a rare treat. Todd Froberg, the agency's big game program coordinator, said the young moose is likely looking for home territory or other moose and is expected to continue moving north. (AP)

Nebraska woman bags marriage proposal soon after killing big buck on hunting trip

OMAHA, Neb. (AP)—A Nebraska woman bagged a marriage proposal earlier this month along with a big buck during a recent deer hunting trip.

Samantha Camenzind's boyfriend not only gave her the first shot at the deer they had spotted on a trail camera south of Lincoln, but then surprised her by popping the question in the middle of a photo shoot with the prized trophy—a giant buck with 11 tines on one side of its antlers and nine on the other.

"Everybody has been saying they would marry him, too, if he let them shoot this big of a deer," Camenzind, 28, who lives in Omaha, told the Omaha World-Herald.

In three years of dating one of the things the couple bonded over is their shared love of hunting. They process and eat the meat of what they kill.

Cole Bures said he didn't have any problem letting Camenzind take the first shot at the buck

"I was just as excited as

she was when she got it," the 32-year-old from Filley, Nebraska said.

Then Bures told Camenzind that he wanted a professional photographer to take some pictures to commemorate the big moment. Partway through the pictures, he got down on one knee and asked her to marry him, allowing the photographer to capture exactly when she said yes.

Bures said he got the idea after a friend made a similar proposal during a hunting trip to Alaska.

Their friends were amazed when they saw the photos.

Science & Technology

Google will start deleting 'inactive' accounts in Dec.

NEW YORK (AP)—Have a Google account you haven't used in a while? If you want to keep it from disappearing, you should sign in before the end of the week.

Under Google's updated inactive-account policy, which the tech giant announced back in May, accounts that haven't been used in at least two years could be deleted. Accounts deemed inactive will be erased in a phased-approach beginning Friday.

If you have an account that's at risk for deletion, you should receive multiple notices from Google sent to the email affiliated with that account and its recovery address (if one exists). But if you're still catching up on this new policy—and want to ensure that your content on Google Drive, Docs, Gmail and more is saved—here's what you need to know.

Why is Google deleting inactive accounts?

In May's announcement, Google attributed its inactive-account update to security issues.

Accounts that haven't been used for a long time are more likely to be compromised, the company said, noting that "forgotten or unattended accounts" typically have old passwords, often lack two-factor authentication and receive fewer security checks. As a result, these accounts could be hijacked and used for spam or other malicious content, as well as identity theft.

How can I prevent my account from being deleted?

The easiest way to keep your Google account active (and thus prevent it from being deleted) is to sign in at least once every two years.

Other actions that fulfill account activity requirements include sending or scrolling through emails, using Google search and watching YouTube videos (YouTube is owned by Google) all while signed into your Google account. Existing subscriptions set up through your Google account, including profiles for third-party apps

and publications, can also account for activity.

Preserving content on Google Photos requires a specific sign-in. As previously announced by Google, Photos content may be similarly deleted after two years of inactivity—meaning you should open the application every so often to keep images from going into the trash.

Are there any exceptions to this policy?

Only personal Google accounts that haven't been used for two years or more will be impacted under this inactive-account update. Accounts made for organizations, like schools or companies, will not be affected, Google says.

Per Google's online policy, other exceptions include Google accounts that manage active minor accounts, accounts containing a gift card balance as well as those that have been used to purchase Google products, apps or subscriptions that are ongoing.

Science Matters

New world map of whales' grounds

A new interactive map of the world traces the oceans' whale populations, combining modern records with those of 19th century whaling ships.

"For with the charts of all four oceans before him, Ahab was threading a maze of currents and eddies, with a view to the more certain accomplishment of that monomaniac thought of his soul."

— Moby-Dick, Chapter 44, "The Chart" (1851)



Whale species

Sperm Fin Killer Humpback Common Minke Gray Sei Bryde's
Pygmy Blue Blue Bowhead Antarctic Minke Unknown Right

The WhaleVis map displays 2 million data points. Viewed using a Web browser, it can be zoomed in to show finer detail. **For example,** a large blue dot at South Georgia island in the South Atlantic, signifies 130,611 whale catches, most of them fin whales.

Source: Lailani Battle and Zoe Rand of University of Washington; International Whaling Commission data
Graphic: Helen Lee McComas, Tribune News Service

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Life & Style

Taylor Swift is Spotify's most-streamed artist of 2023, ending Bad Bunny's 3-year reign

LOS ANGELES (AP)—It's her, hi—Taylor Swift is Spotify's 2023 most-played artist. According to Spotify Wrapped, Swift was 2023's most-streamed artist globally, raking in more than 26.1 billion streams since January 1. That means the pop powerhouse has dethroned Puerto Rican reggaeton star Bad Bunny, who held the coveted title for three years in a row beginning in 2020. He's in the number two slot in 2023, followed by The Weeknd in third, Drake in fourth, and regional Mexican musician Peso Pluma in fifth.

It's not such bad news for Bad Bunny, however: his 2022 album "Un Verano Sin Ti" was Spotify's most-streamed album for the second year in a row, raking in 4.5 billion global streams. In that category, Taylor Swift's "Midnights" trails in second, with SZA's "SOS" in third. All three albums were released last year. The top five is rounded out with The Weeknd's 2016 album "Starboy" and Karol G's "Mañana Será Bonito," the only 2023 release to reach the peak. Miley Cyrus' empowerment anthem "Flowers" is Spotify's

most-streamed song of the year with 1.6 million streams globally. "Kill Bill" by SZA is the second most-streamed song of the year, while Harry Styles' "As It Was," BTS member Jung Kook featuring Latto's "Seven," and Eslabon Armado and Peso Pluma's "Ella Baila Sola" came in third, fourth and fifth, respectively. In the U.S., Swift's dominance continued—she was the most streamed artist on the platform, followed by Drake and country star Morgan Wallen. Wallen's "Last



AP PHOTO/GEORGE WALKER IV, FILE
Taylor Swift performs during "The Eras Tour" in Nashville, Tenn., May 5, 2023.

on Spotify Wrapped should come as no surprise—they're featured prominently across the streaming service, including on its highly influential playlists, in addition to boasting loyal, dedicated fanbases. For independent artists who may appear on an individual listener's Wrapped, accessing a top spot on the global list would require billions of streams. According to Business Insider, artists make around \$.003 and \$.005 per stream, though Spotify itself does not pay per stream. Instead, they pay per "streamshare," a figure that is determined by adding up how many times music owned or controlled by a particular rights holder is streamed, divided by the total number of streams in the market it is streamed in each month.

Britain's Parliament honors Elton John for HIV fight

LONDON (AP)—Elton John has addressed Britain's Parliament at an event honoring his dedication to fighting HIV in the U.K. and beyond. The British star spoke to dozens of lawmakers and campaigners in the grand Speaker's House of Parliament on Wednesday. John set up his AIDS Foundation in 1992 and has helped raise millions of dollars to prevent HIV infections and reduce stigma. "This evening I was privileged to welcome Sir Elton John and acknowledge his exceptional contribution to the global fight against HIV and AIDS—personally and through the Elton John AIDS Foundation," Commons Speaker Lindsay Hoyle said on X, formerly Twitter. "His work embodies the solidarity and kindness that defines our shared humanity," he added. In the U.K., the charity re-

cently led campaigns to extend a pilot government program to test people visiting hospitals' emergency rooms for HIV. Under the program, which was recently introduced in London and other cities with a high prevalence of HIV cases, anyone 16 years old or older who has their blood tested in an emergency room will also get tested for HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C, unless they opt out of the testing. John's charity has urged the government to expand the service, which officials say has been key in discovering hundreds of undetected cases of HIV. "Routine HIV testing in emergency departments is especially good at finding people who would otherwise not receive a test, most often from marginalized communities who are being left behind in our progress on HIV," said Deborah Gold, chief executive of National Aids Trust.

On Wednesday health officials confirmed that the program will be scaled up to 46 more emergency departments, helping reach the estimated 4,500 people in England who could be living with undiagnosed HIV. The Parliament reception for John came ahead of World AIDS Day, which takes place on Friday. The U.K. hopes to achieve zero HIV transmissions in England by 2030, in line with World Health Organization goals. Earlier Wednesday, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak also paid tribute to John's AIDS Foundation, saying he was pleased its work was being celebrated in Parliament. "Sir Elton has been a powerful voice for change in the U.K. and the world," Sunak told lawmakers. "Through the brilliant work of the AIDS Foundation he has raised awareness of the issue, reduced stigma and saved lives."

Night" was the most streamed song, and his full-length "One Thing at a Time" was the most streamed-album. On Tuesday, Apple Music announced Wallen's "Last Night" topped its global song chart in 2023. It has been a banner year for the song, which also stayed atop the Billboard Hot 100 for 16 weeks, tying Luis Fonsi & Daddy Yankee feat. Justin Bieber's "Despacito" for the title of second-longest reign in the Hot 100's 65-year history. That the biggest artists, globally, earned top spots

Daryl Hall accuses John Oates of 'partnership betrayal'

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP)—Daryl Hall has accused his longtime music partner John Oates of committing the "ultimate partnership betrayal" by planning to sell his share of the Hall & Oates duo's joint venture without the other's permission, Hall said in a court declaration supporting his lawsuit to keep the transaction paused. In the declaration filed Wednesday in a Nashville chancery court, Hall also lamented the deterioration of his relationship with and trust in his musical partner of more than a half-century. The joint venture in question includes Hall & Oates trademarks, personal name and likeness

rights, record royalty income and website and social media assets, the declaration states. In his own court filing later Wednesday, Oates said that he was disappointed in Hall's "inflammatory, outlandish, and inaccurate statements about me," and argued that he had been trying for some time to enhance their business partnership. A judge has issued a temporarily restraining order blocking the sale of Oates' share of Whole Oats Enterprises LLP to Primary Wave IP Investment Management LLC while legal proceedings and a previously initiated arbitration continue. A court hearing is scheduled

Thursday in the case. Hall is seeking further court action to keep the transaction on hold. "While falsely contending over the last several months that the Oates Trust wanted to maintain ownership in WOE, John Oates and the Co-Trustees engaged in the ultimate partnership betrayal," Hall said in a declaration. "They surreptitiously sought to sell half of the WOE assets without obtaining my written approval." Oates argued in his filings that the court should not extend the temporary restraining order, and he said he didn't want to publicly address details of business dealings that he considers "private matters."

Man likes to let others do the heavy lifting

DEAR ABBY: Our son plays a college sport for which he receives four complimentary tickets for each game. It works out well because there are four of us in his immediate family. However, my husband has been asking friends of his to join us at games by offering them free tickets. Our son then must find a teammate with unused tickets and ask for them. My husband gives no warning. He just announces a couple of days prior to a game that he has invited so and so. Then, on game day, we are responsible for getting these friends in and seated with us. More than once, we haven't been able to enter stadiums and see our son before games, or the beginning of a game, because his friends are late and he must stay behind to meet them. My take is this: These are public sporting events. Our son is given tickets for IMMEDIATE family. If a friend expresses a desire to go to a game, send them the schedule and say, "Awesome! Here's the schedule. See you there!" and recommend an online ticket vending site. I think it's inconsiderate to me and our son that my husband turns it into a three-ring circus. He thinks "the more the merrier" and isn't concerned about the hassle he creates for our son or my feelings. Am I being irrational?

IRRITATED IN THE EAST

DEAR IRRITATED: You are not being irrational. Your husband behaves this way because HE doesn't have to bear the burden of the inconvenience he causes. If you would like to put an end to what he has been doing, make HIM responsible for buying his friends' tickets and missing the start of the game if they are late. Stop making it your problem and place it where it really belongs. ■ ■ ■ DEAR ABBY: I have a serious problem I have lived with for practically my whole life. I'm sloppy. I am incapable of keeping my surroundings clean and taking care of my belongings. Each time I resolve to get busy and clean up my house or car or whatever, I become overwhelmed with anxiety and nothing gets done. Being unable to keep my surroundings clean and take proper care of my possessions has led to some very unpleasant situations in the past. I can no longer afford to continue this pattern of behavior. Please tell me what to do. SLOPPY JOE IN INDIANA DEAR JOE: You have already taken the first step, which is admitting you have a problem with which you need help. You might feel less overwhelmed if you take on these projects one at a time. Start with one drawer or counter before

DEAR ABBY

BY ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

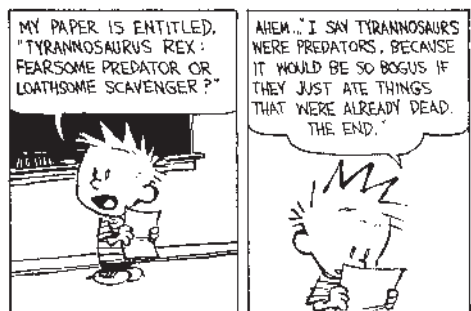
Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.



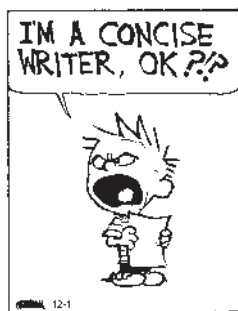
moving on to the next. ■ ■ ■ An important next step would be to tell your doctor what has been going on, and ask for a referral to a psychotherapist who can help get to the root of your anxiety. Talking with a mental health professional and possibly taking medication could be helpful, and I hope you will consider it. I applaud you for reaching out. You are not alone in having this issue. To order "How to Write Letters for All Occasions," send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for \$8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby -- Letter Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

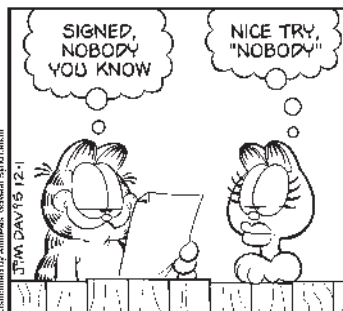
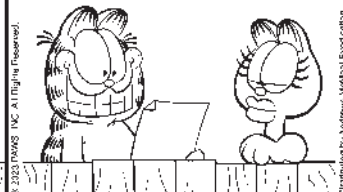


By Bill Waterson



Garfield®

By Jim Davis



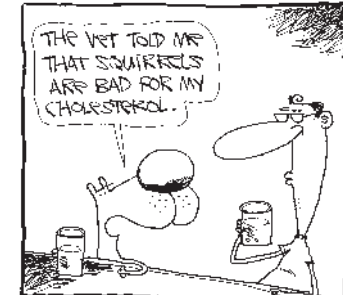
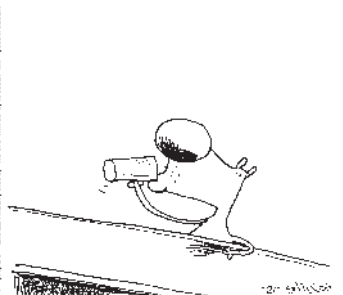
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset



The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



CROSSWORD

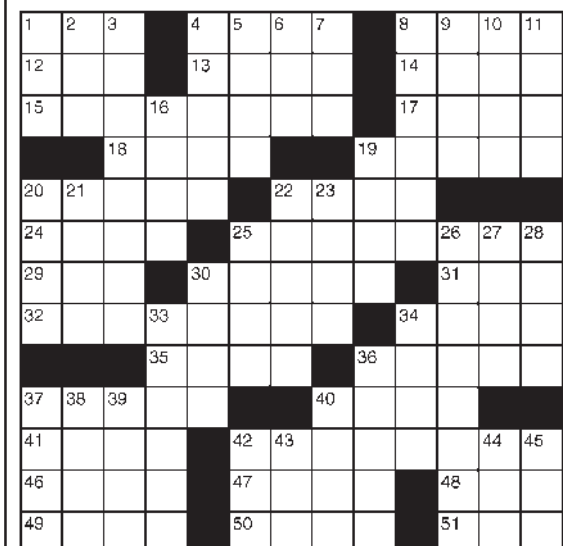
By Eugene Sheffer

- ACROSS**
- 1 Armed conflict
- 4 Be slack-jawed
- 8 Akron's state
- 12 Land in la mer
- 13 Mob scene
- 14 Shaving mishap
- 15 Coffee-flavored liqueur
- 17 Beagle's bane
- 18 Ethel's pal on old TV
- 19 Choreographer Alvin
- 20 Sheriff's star
- 22 Bridge fee
- 24 Pub orders
- 25 Cheesy diner favorite
- 29 Irish actor Stephen
- 30 Big books
- 31 PBS funder
- 32 Song by Etta James
- DOWN**
- 34 Prudish
- 35 — Godiva
- 36 Inventor Howe
- 37 Senate broadcaster
- 40 Sir Guinness
- 41 Throat clearer
- 42 Agra landmark
- 46 Country singer Evans
- 47 Tart fruit
- 48 Prefix with center
- 49 Band boosters
- 50 Short-ened wd.
- 51 Lion's home
- 1 Humorist
- 2 Boxer Laila
- 3 Genuine, "the"
- 4 Dinner prayer
- 5 Ethereal
- 6 Luau dish
- 7 Greek vowel
- 8 Video-taped
- 9 Mound
- 10 Frozen drink
- 11 Fine brand
- 16 Coffee cups
- 19 Regret-tably
- 20 Lisa's brother
- 21 Out of the storm
- 22 Kid's belly
- 23 Draft status
- 25 Frog's kin
- 26 Fortified
- 27 "Star Wars" royal
- 28 Highland hats
- 30 Eliot Ness, e.g.
- 33 Andean critters
- 34 Entreaty
- 36 Fudd of cartoons
- 37 Juanita's home
- 38 Counterfeit
- 39 Criminal, to cops
- 40 "This is — for Superman!"
- 42 Airport org.
- 43 Cleric's garment
- 44 Gorilla
- 45 Architect Maya

Solution time: 25 mins.



Yesterday's answer 12-1



STUMPED?

For answers to today's crossword, call 1-900-226-5955! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Vance Joy, 36; Sarah Silverman, 53; Nestor Carbonell, 56; Bette Midler, 78.

Happy Birthday: A financial change is heading your way. Be innovative, let your intuition guide you, expect the unusual and learn to accept and embrace whatever comes your way. Take responsibility and focus on achieving what you want to pursue. Keep an open mind and listen to experts, but be sure something is a good fit for you before you get involved. Charm your way forward, but don't sugarcoat what you have to offer. Your numbers are 9, 14, 22, 26, 30, 37, 42.

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Participate and show everyone what you can do. An innovative approach to life, love and happiness will create a stir among your peers and help you attract support. Self-improvement will not go unnoticed; love and romance are in the stars. ****

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Don't take on more than you can handle. Your reputation is at stake, and how others perceive you will determine the possibilities. Accepting and making changes without skipping a beat will play in your favor. Embrace new beginnings. **

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Size up your situation and plan to rectify whatever isn't working for you. Update your qualifications, appearance or prospects to meet your demands. Gather information to help you secure a routine that offers peace of mind and a clear passage forward. ****

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Overindulgence will be your downfall. Don't try to buy someone's attention or affection. Stay calm and use your intelligence to get what you want. Invest more time in yourself, and strive

for personal growth. Don't take a risk with your health or financial stability. ***

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Put drama aside and play fairly. Recognize the possibilities and aim to secure your position using intelligence and skills to your advantage. Make unique plans with someone you love, and share your intentions. Put your goals in motion and a positive lifestyle in place. ***

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Don't let anger set in when intelligence is required. Consider what you want and adjust whatever is necessary to reach your goal. Opportunity is available, but it requires a hands-on effort to ensure you make the most of every situation you encounter. ***

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Research is favored. A firm grip on what's possible will be your ticket to success. Speak up, ask questions and choose what feels right and is within your budget. Make stability one of your goals, and the outcome will offer gratitude. **

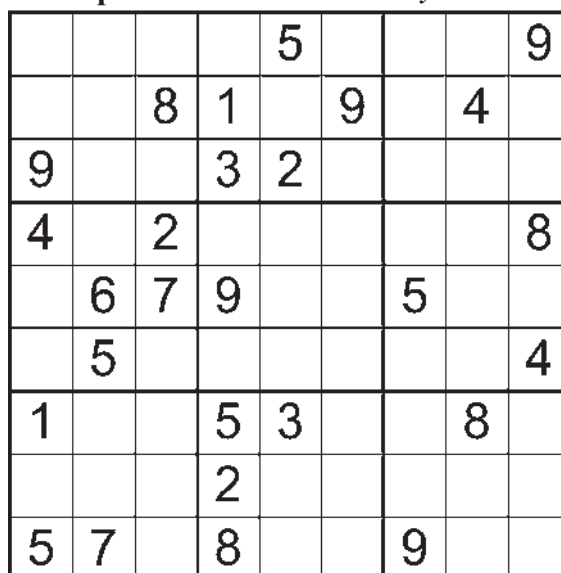
SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Learn, develop your style and use your skills uniquely. Embrace change and turn it into an opportunity. Speak from the heart; the right people will help you reach your destination. Time is on your side, and trusting and believing in yourself will suffice. *****

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Speed up the process and head for the finish line. Inject your strength and courage into whatever you pursue. Don't trust others to be honest regarding their intentions. Consider what you can do yourself, and don't rely on others to do things for you. ***

SUDOKU

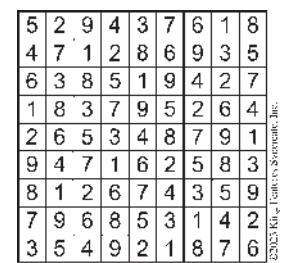
Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green



Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer



Difficulty: ★★★★★

12/1

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EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Be open regarding your plans. Listen to the feedback offered, and you'll sidestep an emotional situation caused by a lack of communication. Don't box yourself into more debt than you can handle. Creative thinking will help you structure a manageable payment plan. ***



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Don't go overboard. Keep things simple, affordable and in your comfort zone. Actions will bring far better results than bragging about what you plan to do next. Update your image and reveal your intentions. Revamp your finances to accommodate your plans. Romance is favored. ***



PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Focus on getting things done. Discipline and hard work will lead to looking and feeling your best. Refuse to let emotional issues bring you down when physical activity will encourage personal growth. Put anger behind you and head in a direction that promises gratitude. ***

Birthday Baby: You are proactive, determined and colorful. You are unique and empathetic.

☺: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ☹: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ☼: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ☼☼: Aim high; start new projects. ☼☼☼: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

TOBOGGAN SEASON IS FINALLY HERE

Solution: 8 letters



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12/1

Ages, Angle, Board, Boots, Camp, Carry, Coast, Coat, Cocoa, Cold, Down, Fall, Forest, Friends, Frozen, Goggles, Gondola, Hat, Helmet, Holiday, Hot Chocolate, Ice, Kids, Luge, Mountain, Olympic, Outdoor, Park, Path, Picture, Push, Race, Sand, Skeleton, Sled, Slide, Slip, Slope, Slush, Snow, Speed, Sport, Steep, Thrill, Valley, Winter, Wonderland, Wood

Yesterday's Answer: Potholes

Purchase THE COLLECTED WONDERWORD, Volumes 56 through 75, in time for the holidays at www.WonderWordBooks.com. (In Canada, call 1-855-232-2367)

Zion's 33 points on near-perfect shooting lift Pelicans past 76ers



NEW ORLEANS (AP)—Zion Williamson took advantage of Joel Embiid's absence and punished the Philadelphia 76ers in the paint.

Williamson scored 33 points, making all but one of his 12 shots, and the New Orleans Pelicans beat the Sixers 124-114 on Wednesday night.

"He was great. He attacked the basket," Pelicans coach Willie Green said. "Getting to the paint was something we were big on."

The 7-foot Embiid was ruled out shortly before tip-off because of an illness, forcing Philadelphia to manage without its leading scorer, who is averaging 32 points this season and also gives the Sixers a formidable defensive presence in the paint.

"We cannot use that as an excuse, and we won't," Sixers coach Nick Nurse said. "What put us in a big hole is we didn't go out and execute our defensive schemes the way we wanted to from the start of the game."

When Williamson wasn't scoring in the paint, he was getting to the free throw line, where he also went 11 of 12.

He grabbed eight rebounds and added six assists, giving him at least 26 points and five assists in each of his past six games.

"He's been knocking off some rust," Green said. "You can see he's getting better and better as we progress. He's starting to find his rhythm."

"We're putting him in different situations and he's thriving," Green added. "So, it's fun to see."

New Orleans, meanwhile, got a key player back. Veteran guard CJ McCollum returned from a partially collapsed lung that had sidelined him for 12 games. He scored 20 points in 28 minutes, including a basket in the final minutes to help put away the game.

"I felt like a kid again," McCollum said. "After being injured, and the type of injury that it was, I'm just thankful I can play at a high level."

Jonas Valanciunas scored 19, Jordan Hawkins added 16 and Brandon Ingram 15 for the Pelicans, who snapped a two-game skid.

Tyrese Maxey scored 33 points and De'Anthony Melton added 17 for the 76ers, who never led and trailed by as many as 16 points in the first quarter. New Orleans took its largest lead at 29 points when Herb Jones' layup made it 94-65 with 4:18 remaining in the third quarter.

The Sixers made a run with mostly reserves on the floor, cutting it to 16 before Nurse choose to put several starters back in for



New Orleans Pelicans forward Zion Williamson (1) drives to the basket against Philadelphia 76ers forward Tobias Harris (12) in the first half of an NBA basketball game in New Orleans, Wednesday, Nov. 29, 2023.

the final minutes, compelling Green to do the same.

"We need to become elite with the small nuances of the game, like tonight, late-game situations," Williamson said. "We can't just give away 20-point leads like that."

The game got as tight as 118-110 when Maxey set up Paul Reed for a short hook with 1:47 left.

"We've got some fighters on this team, so we were never going to give up," Maxey said. "We were never going to concede defeat. That's not in our blood."

But McCollum responded by hitting a running floater, Valanciunas added a dunk and Williamson hit a layup as New Orleans pulled away for good.

The final box score initially had Williamson as a perfect 11 of 11 from field, which would have made him the first player in franchise history to do that. But it was changed after the game by the NBA, which deemed that Williamson was in the act of shooting when he lost a ball out of bounds while being guarded by Mo Bamba early in the fourth quarter.

"I was just shocked because I thought it was a foul," Williamson said.

But he didn't seem too upset when he found out it officially went down as his lone missed shot.

"Got to take that one to chin," Williamson said, laughing. "That's tough."

LAKERS 133, PISTONS 107

DETROIT (AP)—D'Angelo

Russell scored a season-high 35 points, Anthony Davis had 28 and LeBron James 25, helping Los Angeles beat Detroit for the Pistons' franchise-record 15th straight loss.

James, coming off a career-high 44-point loss at Philadelphia, and his teammates were very loose during pregame warmups, perhaps sensing it would be an easy night to bounce back.

And, they were right.

The Lakers led 38-24 after the opening quarter, shooting 60% to Detroit's 36%.

Even though there were three quarters left, the outcome seemed certain against an offensively challenged team that doesn't play stingy defense and is a league-worst 2-16.

Detroit broke the franchise record after sharing it with three teams that had 14-game skids during the 2021-22, 1993-94 and 1979-80 seasons.

NUGGETS 134, ROCKETS 124

DENVER (AP)—Nikola Jokic had 32 points, 15 assists and 10 rebounds, Michael Porter Jr. scored a season-high 30 points and Denver rolled past Houston in Jamal Murray's return from a hamstring injury.

Murray scored 16 points after missing Denver's past 11 games. After starting 6-1 with Murray available, the Nuggets were just 6-5 without their point guard.

It was the third consecutive win for the NBA champion Nuggets, who had lost four of five before their current streak.

Jokic, who was sidelined

with a lower back injury in a win Monday at the Los Angeles Clippers, recorded his seventh triple-double of the season. Entering the night, all other NBA players had combined for just eight triple-doubles.

Denver had lost twice to the Rockets in November, including a 19-point loss in Houston five days earlier. The Nuggets improved their NBA-best home record to 9-0 while dropping the Rockets to 0-7 on the road.

RAPTORS 112, SUNS 105

TORONTO (AP)—Scottie Barnes scored 23 points, Pascal Siakam had 22 and Toronto ended Phoenix's winning streak at seven.

Kevin Durant scored 11 of his 30 points in the fourth quarter for Phoenix after missing two games because of a sore foot, while fellow star Devin Booker had only eight points. The Suns lost for the first time

since a Nov. 12 at home against Oklahoma City.

Booker, who beat the New York Knicks on Sunday night with a 3-pointer with 1.7 seconds left, missed a 3 that would have tied it with 50 seconds remaining. Booker shot 2 for 12, going 0 for 4 on 3-pointers.

Jusuf Nurkic had 19 points and 14 rebounds for the Suns, who shot 7 for 26 from 3-point range, matching their fewest made 3-pointers this season. Durant shot 2 for 8 from beyond the arc. Eric Gordon and Josh Okogie each scored 10 points.

CLIPPERS 131, KINGS 117

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP)—Kawhi Leonard had 34 points and seven assists, James Harden scored 26 points and Los Angeles overcame a big game by De'Aaron Fox to beat Sacramento.

Paul George added 19 points and seven assists for the Clip-

pers, who defeated the Kings for the first time since October 2022.

Fox scored 40 points on 14-of-23 shooting for Sacramento, which was coming off an emotional win over Golden State that advanced the Kings to the knockout round of the In-Season Tournament.

Leonard shot 14 of 18 from the field, including 2 for 3 on 3-pointers, and Harden was 8 of 14, including 5 of 8 on 3s.

MAGIC 139, WIZARDS 120

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP)—Franz Wagner scored 31 points, Cole Anthony added 25 and Orlando beat Washington for its eighth straight victory.

Jalen Suggs had 22 points for the Magic, who were eliminated from the NBA's inaugural In-Season Tournament by a tiebreaker Tuesday night. Their win streak is one short of the franchise record set in 1994 and matched twice in this century.

Kyle Kuzma led Washington with 24 points. Deni Avdija added 22 and Jordan Poole scored 19.

The Magic shot 60.7% overall and made 17 of 27 from 3-point range in the opener of a two-game series. The teams play again Friday in Orlando.

GRIZZLIES 105, JAZZ 91

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) - Jaren Jackson Jr. had 20 points and six blocks, David Roddy added 19 points and Memphis defeated Utah for its first home win of the season.

Desmond Bane added 17 for Memphis, which snapped a four-game losing streak. Ziaire Williams finished with 15 points. Derrick Rose had 14 points and nine assists.

John Collins led the Jazz with 17 points, while Jordan Clarkson and Simone Fontecchio each added 12. Utah was hindered by shooting 38% for the night, while committing 17 turnovers.

Memphis, which was 35-6 at home last season, had lost its first eight home games this year.

Several surprises play way into early season MVP discussion with the usual suspects

DENVER (AP)—SGA for MVP has a certain ring to it. The notion isn't far-fetched, either.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander is among the early season surprises who have played their way into the MVP conversation, joining the usual list of NBA stars that includes Nikola Jokic and Joel Embiid.

Gilgeous-Alexander, Tyrese Maxey, Tyrese Haliburton, Anthony Edwards, Bam Adebayo and De'Aaron Fox are turning

in MVP-caliber seasons as the NBA In-Season Tournament heads into the knockout phase (minus Jokic and the defending NBA champion Nuggets).

Indeed, Jokic keeps doing Jokic-type things: posting triple-doubles galore as he dishes out jaw-dropping, no-look passes. It's the reason why the Nuggets' big man remains the early favorite, according to the FanDuel Sportsbook. Reigning MVP Embiid is right up there, too,

along with the familiar names on the list like Luka Doncic, Giannis Antetokounmpo, Stephen Curry, Jayson Tatum, Kevin Durant and Devin Booker.

And let's not forget about the seemingly ageless LeBron James. The soon-to-be 39-year-old continues to defy Father Time. He's working his way into the mix for a fifth MVP award as he posts numbers similar to when he won the honor in 2012-13.

AHEAD OF NFC TITLE GAME REMATCH

49ers, Eagles focused on reversing last season's disappointment

By JOSH DUBOW
AP PRO FOOTBALL WRITER



The Philadelphia Eagles and San Francisco 49ers haven't let last season's postseason disappointment become a hangover in 2023.

Both teams head into Sunday's rematch of last season's NFC title game with a chance to turn those recent failures into success.

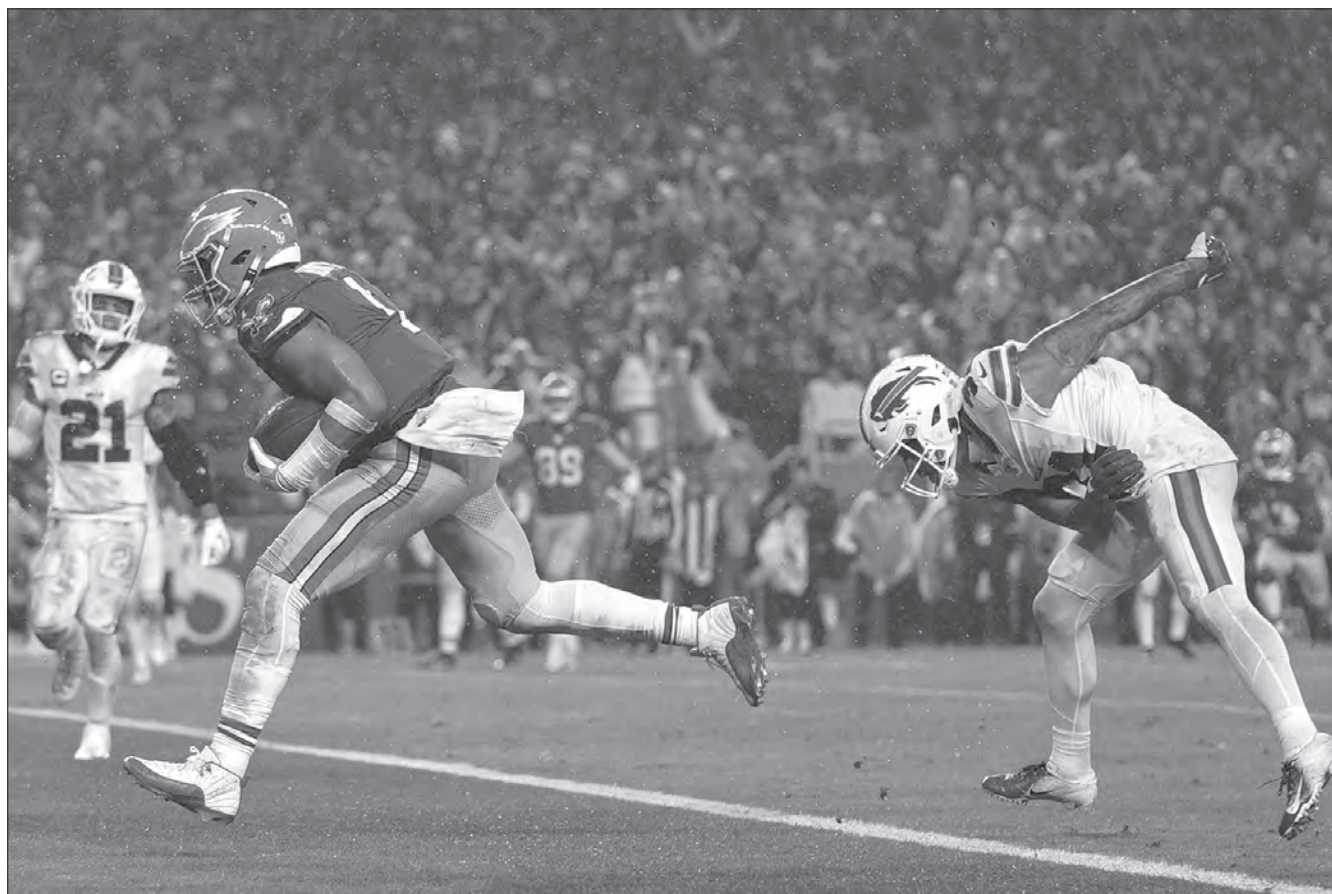
Philadelphia, coming off a Super Bowl loss last season to Kansas City, is the fourth Super Bowl runner-up to start the following season 10-1 or better, joining the 1991 Bills, the 1975 Vikings and the undefeated Dolphins in 1972.

The goal for Philadelphia (10-1) is to match those 1972 Dolphins, one of three teams to win the Super Bowl the year after losing the title game. Dallas did it the previous season with a win over Miami, and the Patriots did it in 2018, after losing to the Eagles the year before.

The Eagles are the fourth team in NFL history to win at least 10 of their first 11 games in back-to-back seasons. They joined the Colts (2005-06), Dolphins (1972-73) and Bears (1941-42).

The Niners have two years of playoff close calls hanging over them, losing the NFC championship game in 2021 to the Rams and last season to the Eagles.

San Francisco has won three



Philadelphia Eagles quarterback Jalen Hurts scores the game winning touchdown against the Buffalo Bills during overtime in an NFL football game Sunday, Nov. 26, 2023, in Philadelphia.

straight games to improve to 8-3 and will try to become the fourth team to follow two straight conference title game losses with a Super Bowl crown. The Patriots did it in 2014, the Niners in 1995 and the Raiders in 1976.

The Eagles and 49ers are currently the top two seeds in the NFC, setting the stage for a rare possible NFC title game rematch. The Niners were involved the only other times it happened, playing Dal-

las three straight years from 1992-94 and in back-to-back seasons in 1971-72.

It has happened five times in the AFC, including last season when the Chiefs hosted the Bengals for a second straight season.

PLAYOFF PUSH

For the sixth consecutive season, a team will go from having a losing record after 11 games to making the playoffs.

With all four teams in the

NFC South having losing records, led by Atlanta and New Orleans at 5-6, the winner of that division will raise the total of playoff teams that had a losing record after 11 games to at least 20 in the past 20 seasons.

At least one team with a losing record after 11 games has made the playoffs in 17 of the past 19 seasons, with both Jacksonville and Tampa Bay doing it last season. Philadelphia did it in 2018, 2019 and 2021, while

Chicago and Washington pulled off the feat in 2020. The last season it didn't happen was 2017.

Other teams with losing records in the mix for a playoff spot this season are Green Bay (5-6) and the Rams (5-6), who are within a half-game of the final wild-card spot in the NFC.

Eight teams enter Week 13 with at least eight wins, tied for the most with that many wins at this point of the season since the 2002 realignment. It also hap-

pened in 2003, 2019 and 2020.

SCORING SLUMP

The last two losses by the New England Patriots sure can't be blamed on their defense.

New England followed up a 10-6 loss to Indianapolis in Germany with a 10-7 defeat against the New York Giants on Sunday, becoming the sixth team in the Super Bowl era to lose back-to-back games when allowing 10 points or fewer in each game.

The Patriots were the previous team to do that in 1993, with the other four instances coming in the lower-scoring era of the 1970s.

New England had gone 77-0 with Tom Brady at quarterback when allowing 10 or fewer points in a game during the regular season or playoffs.

WHAT'S THE POINT?

When it comes to scoring differential, the Buffalo Bills have been dominant. The wins and losses tell a different story.

The Bills have outscored their opponents by 101 points—fourth best in the NFL—but have only a 6-6 record to show for it.

Buffalo is one of 269 teams to outscore the opposition by at least 100 points in the first 12 games of the season but only the second to do it without posting a winning record. Philadelphia was 6-6 through 12 games in 1950 despite a plus-113 point differential.

Of the 172 teams since the merger to outscore the opposition by at least 100 points through the first 12 games of the season, 164 made the playoffs. Buffalo has an uphill battle to avoid becoming the first of those teams since the 2005 Chargers to miss the postseason.

OH CANADA!

The Pittsburgh Steelers finally crossed the 400-yard threshold.

In their first game since firing offensive coordinator Matt Canada, Pittsburgh put up 421 yards of offense in a win over Cincinnati. It was the first time the Steelers reached 400 yards in a game since a playoff loss to Cleveland in the 2020 season with Randy Fichtner as coordinator.

Canada took over to start the 2021 season and Pittsburgh didn't gain 400 yards once in his 45 games calling plays. The rest of the league combined for 333 games in the regular season or playoffs with at least 400 yards of offense during Canada's tenure.

The Steelers had gone 58 straight regular-season games without gaining 400 yards, the second-longest drought in the past 30 seasons to a 75-gamer for the Raiders from 2005-10.

Kyren Williams persevered through injuries, adversity to become LA Rams' rising star

THOUSAND OAKS, Calif. (AP)—Kyren Williams' NFL career is going the way he always imagined it, even if he needed a bit longer than he thought to seize this spotlight with the Los Angeles Rams.

The running back who grew up in St. Louis idolizing the Rams' Steven Jackson is now asserting himself as an heir to his hero with 599 yards rushing in just seven games in his second season. He has rebounded superbly from an injury-shortened rookie year, seizing a prominent role this fall and then returning from another injury last week with his biggest performance of all.

"It kind of continued the same pattern in my life," Williams said Wednesday. "Ever since high school, I've been that overlooked type of player, you know? Never able to have the shine right off the bat. I always had to work for everything. So for me, it was able to get through the storm, weather the storm and come out better because of it and get to where I'm at now. Now, I'm not looking

back. I'm just going for it."

Williams was named the NFC's offensive player of the week after his do-everything performance in the Rams' 37-14 win at Arizona last Sunday. He racked up 143 yards rushing on just 16 carries and added six receptions for 61 yards and two touchdowns, catching every pass thrown his way by Matthew Stafford.

"It's definitely cool to be recognized," Williams said. "It's a blessing. But I want more of those, so I've got to keep on working."

The ups and downs of a relatively short NFL career have only fueled Williams, who is the engine driving the Rams (5-6) into the playoff race after they nearly fell all the way out during his recent absence. Los Angeles has won two straight heading into a key home game against Cleveland on Sunday, pitting Williams' offense against one of the league's top defenses.

Stafford has only played with one 1,000-yard rusher in his 15 NFL seasons—Reggie Bush in Detroit a decade

ago—but the veteran quarterback is thrilled for the Rams to have a running back with Williams' star potential.

"Helps to hopefully keep our defense off the field when you're able to be efficient on some of the run-game stuff," Stafford said. "It obviously gives our coach and coordinator confidence to call his plays, and we're getting big (gains) out of it. The explosives were huge last week. (Williams and backup Royce Freeman) are getting it done in the run game and the pass game, so it's fun to watch, fun to be a part of. I think it fires up our guys up front and our guys on the perimeter. If they continue to block, good things are going to happen. Those backs are going to get to the second level."

Williams' childhood in St. Louis coincided with Jackson's 11 seasons, during which he became the leading rusher in Rams franchise history. Williams imagined himself wearing the horned helmet for that whole time, and he was thrilled when the Rams draft-

ed him out of Notre Dame.

But after the excitement of being chosen by the defending Super Bowl champions wore off a bit, Williams' rookie season was kind of a chore. He broke his foot in offseason workouts, and then he incurred a high ankle sprain on a kick return in Week 1, spending two months on injured reserve.

Williams eventually returned, but had just one game with more than seven carries while the Rams went 5-12. He came back last spring competing for snaps behind Cam Akers, who rushed for 786 yards in 2022.

But even before Akers' second major clash with the Rams' coaching staff led to his abrupt departure in Week 3, Williams had asserted himself.

Williams scored six total touchdowns and had his first 100-yard rushing game in the season's first four weeks, and then he really arrived in LA's first meeting with the Cardinals by producing a 158-yard performance, the Rams' biggest ground game

in roughly three years.

Even more adversity lurked: Williams sprained his ankle late in that game and missed the next four, only returning last week. His mother, sister and extended family flew out to watch his latest breakout performance—and Williams smiles at the memory of his uncle's tears when he received Williams' jersey postgame.

Williams knows this grueling profession is about to get harder: The Browns will be fully aware of what he's been doing, and Williams is likely to see more attention than he's received in his short career.

"I would expect nothing less," Williams said. "We're in the NFL. We've got great coaches. They obviously have a great game plan and know what to scheme against, and we've got great players on offense. It's not going to be just me that they scheme against, but we've got other threats at the receiver options, which allows me to be able to probably get less attention, but I'm excited for whatever is to come."

By **MARK RABAGO**
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
EDITOR



The Experts Class' loss is actually not the Veterans Class' gain. In fact, it's the exact opposite as Justis "Cuki" Alvarez retired from the ultra-competitive division to rule the latter in last weekend's 2023 Turkey Cross at the Cowtown Race Park.

Aboard his Kawasaki KX250F from Cycles Plus Guam, Alvarez celebrated his 53rd birthday by sweeping all heats of the Veteran Class for 75 points. A pair of Guamanian riders followed in his wake—Gregorio Perez and Franklin Rios with a pair of 62 points.



TISHA FERRER

Justis "Cuki" Alvarez in action in the Veterans Class of last weekend's 2023 Turkey Cross at the Cowtown Race Park.

"It was a great race. I decided not to do the extra division this year. Kind of want to leave that to the young guys. I'm way past my prime and these young guys are getting a lot faster and it's getting harder to keep up with them. As for the Veterans

Class, it's always a pleasure. It's a great honor and privilege riding with a bunch of the older guys who have been around the sport for 30, 40, 45 years or more. It was great to continue racing with them and although we're not at the speed that we

used to be, we're still freaking very competitive and we still want to win," he said.

The longtime boat captain and owner of Trench Tech Racing and Trench Tech Gym said he's just amazed how older riders like him continue to love the sport of motocross.

"We just want to do it at a slower and safer pace. We got to think longevity now. One of my competitors was Frank Rios and he's 65 years old. He was on my butt for a little bit, but it was a good race all around. I'm just happy to continue to do what I love, and enjoy. Hopefully this is an inspiration for the younger generation coming up to show them that they can do this for a

long time. They just have to ride smart and safe."

In the ATV Veterans Class, Greg Clark was tops with 70 points, followed by Bob Bucek and Henry Camacho Sr. with 69 points and 62 points, respectively.

Franklin Rios was perfect in the Legends Class with 72 points with Jeffrey Rios coming in second with 64 points, barely beating the 62 points of Marianas Racing Association president Charles Cepeda.

In the Big Boy ATV Class, Christian "Hollywood" Cama-

cho stamped his class with a perfect run enroute to 75 points. Picking up the crumbs were Greg Clark (62 points) and Bob Bucek (60 points).

Kanen Arceo topped the Novice Class with his 75 points that beat out Vicente Palacios' 64 points and Matthew Guerrero's 58 points.

In the Intermediate Class, Aric Cruz rallied from a slow start in Heat 1 to win with 68 points. Kanen Arceo and Vicente Palacios came in second and third with 64 points and 56 points, respectively.

Agape is champion of MS badminton

By **CHRYSTAL MARINO**
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CORRESPONDENT



Agape Christian School was declared the Middle School Division champions of the TakeCare Insurance Interscholastic Badminton League 2023-2024 last Nov. 18 at the Gilbert C. Gymnasium.

ACS defeated Saipan International School in the finals after both teams topped their respective brackets. The former finished its bracket with a 31-14 win-loss, while the latter completed its bracket assignments with a slate of 41-4.

Initially, SIS tied with Hopwood Middle School 2 (41-19), but SIS won the tiebreak due to head-to-head record, as the Geckos beat the Hilitai in pool play, 10-5.

So as fate would have it, SIS went head-to-head versus Agape in the finals with Agape claiming the win for the girls singles, boys singles, and boys doubles.

Agape's Joanna Zhang defeated Aubrey White, 21-9,



CHRYSTAL MARINO

Agape Christian School players and ACS administrator pastor Kok H. Pang pose for a group photo after winning the championship of the TakeCare Insurance Interscholastic Badminton League 2023-2024 middle School division last Nov. 18 at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

21-6; Daniel Yang defeated SIS' Jude Rayphand, 21-8 and 21-12; and Agape's Daniel and Joseph Yang topped SIS' Kanoa Owens and Jude Rayphand, 21-11.

SIS showed their determination on the court as well, securing a win in the women's doubles, when Lina Tsukagoshi and Adelle Taflinger defeated Agape's Joyce Ying and Kate Xu, 21-7, and Tsukagoshi and Michael Guintu defeated Agape's Joseph Yang and Joanna Zhang, 21-20, 22-20, in the mixed doubles.

At the end, Agape took the championship trophy home with the score of 9-6.

When speaking to ACS

administrator pastor Kok H. Pang, he thanked the organizing Northern Marianas Badminton Association, Take Care Insurance, and the Public School System for organizing and sponsoring the event, and for all the other schools who came to play.

"I think this was a short season and I'm glad our students are enjoying it. Well done to the organizers and the PSS Athletic Program and NMBA for organizing this. I also want to say thank you so much to the parents for letting their kids be a part of playing sports. And I want to thank God for giving us these talented students who want

to get involved in sports, and their willingness to learn."

He noted how the win was a welcome surprise for the Gualo Rai institution.

"When we first started we had no idea [we'd win] because we knew that SIS were the defending champions for the last two years and they were very strong in the women's division. We were not sure whether we would qualify in the championship or not..." he said, adding that he was grateful.

He shared that in the coming years as they play more their team will only get better and that he looks forward to the growth of the NMBA and the sport overall.

"I see a lot of youngsters rising up, and they have a good program they can compete in games outside of our island. I think this is good for youngsters to be involved in sports. This will help them mentally and socially, and is great ground to work with people. The world is not getting better but we need to encourage one another in the end."

In the battle for third, Hopwood Middle School beat Saipan Community School, 10-5.

[to] give them opportunities. Then NMI national team [will] continue stronger."

For athletics last Wednesday, Theodore Rodgers made it to the 200m finals with a time of 23.76 seconds; Alexander Camacho finished the same race at 24.36 seconds. They did not advance to the finals yesterday. As of press time, there were no results for Casey Cruz, Pony Tang, and Maria Igitol's events yesterday.

Triathlon's solo athlete, Leo Wania improved upon his overall time from 49:49 to 47:39 in the B finals yesterday morning.

Va'a's V1 paddlers Tyler Andrew and Janisha Dubrall took on the 16-km long-distance course yesterday morning at DC Park. Andrew finished with a time of 2:17.39, while Dubrall did not finish.

TAN

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gold medals, courtesy of tennis: men's singles (Colin Sinclair), mixed doubles (Sinclair and Carol Lee), and men's team event (Sinclair, Robbie Schorr, and Ken Song).

In Honiara, weightlifter Raymond Santos and swimmer Isiah Aleksenko gave the NMI its first two gold medals in Week 1 of the 2023 Pacific Games. Bodybuilder Christina Tudela then opened Week 2 with a gold medal win in the model physique category before Tan clinched back-to-back golds in the athletics competition.

Mister, Johnson sweep pool play

In beach volleyball, Andrew Johnson and Logan Mister remain in medal contention after topping Group C and sweeping their three assignments in pool play.

The NMI duo capped its perfect record in pool play with a tough 23-21, 20-22, 15-12 win over Vanuatu's James Chilia and Stivano Banga last Wednesday night. It was an early revenge for Johnson and Mister as they lost to the Vanuatu pair in the finale of last year's Pacific Mini Games hosted on Saipan. Besides beating Vanuatu, the NMI also topped Palau and Tonga to reach the men's championship bracket.

Johnson and Mister drew a bye in the championship bracket and was waiting for the winner in the afternoon match between Papua New Guinea and Samoa. The victor was scheduled take on the NMI in the 8pm match (7pm Saipan time) last night and if Johnson and Mister win,

they may likely challenge Australia, which also swept its assignments in Pool B.

Meanwhile, the NMI Men's National Football Team wrapped up its competition and scored one more goal in its last game in the 2023 Pacific Games. Markus Toves scored for the NMI in the second half to foil Tuvalu's bid for a shutout win, 1-4.

In athletics, Theodore Rodgers raced in the men's 200m semis yesterday and clocked in at 24.5 seconds. In the women's javelin, Maria Quitugua recorded 29.07m, while Lyle Andrew was scheduled to compete in the men's discus throw last night, but results of the event were unavailable at press time.

In va'a, the the NMI women's team reached the semis of the V6 1,500m race last Wednesday and clocked in at 13:47.42. Tahiti won the gold with a time of 9:52.02, while Fiji and Cook Islands got the silver and bronze, respectively. The va'a races will conclude today with the men's and women's V6 24KM events.

Then this Saturday, the 2023 Pacific Games will have its closing ceremonies to wrap-up the two-week competition. Team Marianas will leave Honiara this Sunday at 5:25pm (Solomon Islands time) and is expected to touch down at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport the same day at 8:35pm (Saipan time).

Team Marianas' participation in this year's Pacific Games is supported by the Joeten Daidai Foundation, Triple J, Crowne Plaza Resort, IT&E, IP&E, Tan Siu Lin Foundation, Mobil, Tan Holdings, and McDonald's of Guam & Saipan. (PR)

SWEET

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our revenge, but we're 1-and-1 now so want to play a deciding match." For Mister, he said, "it feels good too, but I don't know. I honestly felt like we didn't play that great... But I think if we play them again, we got 'em. It'd be nice to get double revenge."

Tyce Mister, the team's coach, said that their strategy was to serve the taller Vanuatu guy to make him work harder and to put up a strong block. "Andrew's defense was on fire, so it was good throughout," he said.

He added, "I think they were a little bit nervous last night, (Wednesday night) so they played a little less aggressive than how I would've liked for them to play, but they did have a

12pm game before that so they were a bit tired."

NMI was perfect in their pool after they first defeated Palau on Tuesday, then Tonga and Vanuatu on Wednesday.

In soccer, the CNMI Men's National Football Team lost their last match of the tournament to Tuvalu, 1-4, yesterday afternoon.

Markus Toves slipped the lone goal in the second half, but by then, Tuvalu had already scored all their four goals. It was a deep hole that the NMI team tried to come out of, but time wasn't on their side, and they settled for the loss.

Head coach Michiteru Mita said of the team's performance, "Our PG started with unexpected loss and team performance wasn't good. From there, the boys showed resilience and team performance

and players mindset improved. Unfortunately, we lost [our] last game against Tuvalu. This was challenging game; we had many sick players."

As for the experience throughout, he said, "The team got a great experience. We played four games in three weeks. This experience made [the] team grow and gave great experience for our young players. [The] boys also showed we can compete in Oceania."

He added, "NMI focus [is] on youth development and we give them many international tournaments opportunities from [a] young age. For sure they grow gradually every after international tournament. Many of them prove that they become stronger and tougher throughout these experiences. We just need to continue [to] support them [and] continue

AWESOME

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to a farewell visit by the hosts and Solo, the 2023 Pacific Games mascot.

It was two hours of entertainment, dance, and food, and at the end, gifts were given to each athlete.

Some members of Team NMI, Wallis & Futuna, Tahiti, Tonga, and others joined in on the dance

in the middle of the pavilion as the crowd cheered, laughed, and danced the night away.

Colin Ramsey, tennis player/coach, said that the night's entertainment was great. He liked the performances and the songs played and how everyone got together as one.

The Pacific Games closing ceremony is set for tomorrow night and the team is scheduled to depart on Sunday afternoon.

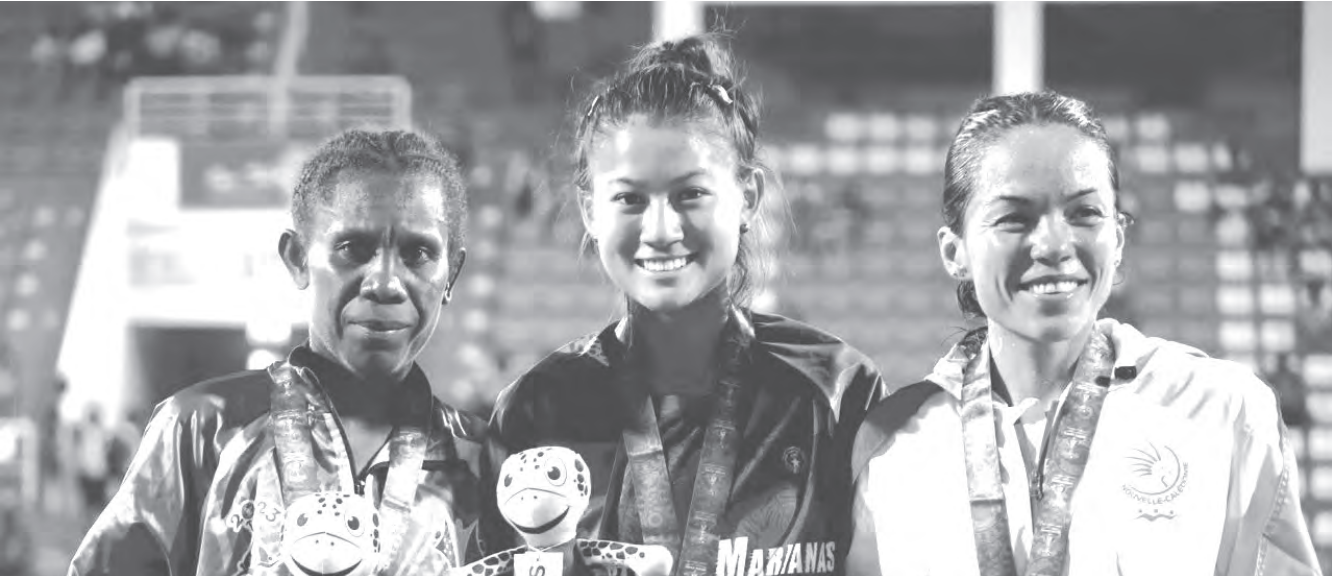
2023 Honiara, Solomon Islands Pacific Games



The CNMI va'a team on the shore of DC Park cheering on V1 paddlers Tyler Andrew and Jenisha Dubrall yesterday morning.



Theodore Rodgers on the big screen before his 200m semis race yesterday at the National Sports Stadium.



Tania Tan, center, won the gold medal in the 10,000m event after just two days since her 5,000m race in which she won her first gold medal. Right is bronze medalist, Deborah Kaboer of New Caledonia, and silver medalist Solomon Islands' Dianah Metakali.



Casey Cruz on the big screen before her 200m semis race yesterday at the National Sports Stadium.



NMI's Ruben Guerrero, right, tries to catch up to a Tuvalu player during their consolation game yesterday at the SIFF 1.



NMI's Dev Bachani sets up the play against Tuvalu during their consolation game yesterday at SIFF 1.



Jerald Aquino goes up against a Tuvalu player for possession during their consolation game yesterday at the SIFF 1.



Tyler Andrew before his V1 long distance race yesterday morning at DC Park.

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Zion's 33 points on near-perfect shooting lift Pelicans past 76ers.

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Saipan Tribune Sports



Cuki cooks competition in Veterans Class.

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24 FRIDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2023

SAIPAN TRIBUNE

'Awesome, incredible, thankful'

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

HONIARA, Solomon Islands—The 2023 Pacific Games are just about over but Team NMI is hanging with the big boys of the Pacific.

With an impressive medal haul so far of 12 medals—5 gold, 1 silver, and 6 bronze—it has far surpassed its tally from the 2019 Pacific Games in Samoa of four medals.

Chef de mission Nick Gross said on Wednesday night that the medal haul so far has been “awesome,” the team’s performance “incredible” and is “thankful” to all the sponsors that assisted the team.

“I don’t want to say that it was unexpected because I know

the hard work that the entire team—all 10 of them—that we got representing the Northern Marianas. I know that it’s been months of hard work, it’s been dedication to training,” he said.

As for the sponsors, he said, “thanks so much to the sponsors so

that we weren’t out shaking the tin jar looking for funding—so much thanks to them so that we could really focus on the task of training—so that we could bring this medal haul for every-



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Tania Tan, right, poses with Solo, the mascot for the 2023 Pacific Games, before she races in the 5,000m run last Monday.

Sweet revenge for beach v-ball duo

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

HONIARA, Solomon Islands—Revenge and redemption is the name of the game in the South Pacific as the NMI’s beach volleyball duo of Logan Mister and Andrew Johnson narrowly defeated their rival Vanuatu in three fight-to-the-death sets Wednesday night at SIFF Academy.

After their win against Vanuatu, they defeated Papua New Guinea in two sets, 21-17, 21-13, in the quarterfinals last night. NMI is playing Australia in the semis today.

Just as the finals match in the 2022 Pacific Mini Games was won by 2 points, it was the NMI boys on the winning side this time as they won, 23-21, 20-22, 15-12 against Vanuatu.

All sets could’ve gone to any team as it was a give and take of points. It was a tied game toward the end of the first set, 16-16, 17-17,

then a one-point 19-18 NMI lead. Vanuatu’s duo came bouncing back and deuced it up, but a great save, good blocks, and a short return gave the advantage and first set win to NMI.

In the second set, however, Vanuatu’s Stivano Banga and James Chilia had the upper hand in most plays. Mister and Johnson fought hard but came up short to clinch the sweep as Vanuatu forced a tie-breaking third set.

It was a tie for the first few points in the last set as Vanuatu was always right behind the NMI. Then, Mister and Johnson began to pull away, 10-7, but Banga and Chilia stepped it up a notch and were never too far behind. Finally, NMI kept a 2-point lead and scooped the win at game-point as a sea of blue NMI supporters cheered them on.

Johnson said of the win, “It feels good. We finally got

See SWEET on Page 21



LEIGH GASES

Logan Mister goes for a kill against a Papua New Guinea player in their quarterfinals match last night at the SIFF Academy. NMI advanced to the semis against Australia who they will play today.

body to celebrate.”

He added, “Incredible—the coaches and the federations that were behind it and Northern Marianas Sports Association—everybody is an integral part to the success of Team Northern Marianas and I just thank everybody for all the hard work.”

Gross said that it’s been difficult from the heat, the dorm living, transportation, “and the list goes on and on, but to be able to

push that aside and compete at the level that we have and have the medal haul that is going, we’re not done!”

“We’re hoping and praying for some more and so keep rocking Team NMI and thanks for everybody’s support back home,” he said.

Athletics, va’a, and beach volleyball have yet to wrap up their competition.

Va’a competitions end today,

while beach volleyball, if they make it to the finals, ends tomorrow. Athletics ends tomorrow as well with two-time Pacific Games gold medalist Tania Tan running the half marathon in the morning.

The five gold medals were from Ray Santos of weightlifting, Isaiah Aleksenko of swimming, Christina Tudela from bodybuilding, and Tan from athletics.

The lone silver medal was from Santos as well. Santos also bagged another bronze, while one bronze was from Aleksenko, two was from the men’s relay swim team, one was from weightlifting’s Leowell Cristobal, and the other was from bodybuilding’s Davy Laxa.

On Wednesday night, the athletes in the athletes’ village of SINU Kukum were treated

See AWESOME on Page 21

Tan first NMI female athlete to win 2 golds in Pacific Games

Tania Tan is the first NMI female athlete to win a pair of gold medals in the history of Northern Marianas Islands’ participation in the Pacific Games.

Tan made heads turn in Honiara, Solomon Islands—the host of the 2023 Pacific Games—after she dominated the 5,000m and 10,000m runs. She set a Pacific Games record in the 5K with her 18:08.69 time in last Monday’s race and then returned to the Honiara Stadium Wednesday night and finished the 10K run first with a time of 39:45.62. The 22-year-old is the only runner to complete the 10K event under 40 minutes, as the runner-up and home favorite Dianah Matekali clocked in at 40:16.42 seconds. In the 5K race, Tan’s was more than 30 seconds ahead of second finisher Herman Scholastica (18:38.93) of Papua New Guinea.

On top of her impressive times, Tan made history for the NMI in the Pacific Games, as she became the first female athlete on the islands to win two

gold medals in the quadrennial competition. There’s only one other athlete that earned a pair of goal medals for the NMI in the Pacific Games—male swimmer and Olympian Jonathan Sakovich.

Sakovich topped the 100m and 200m freestyle event in the 1987 South Pacific Games held in Noumea, New Caledonia.

In the history of NMI’s participation in the Pacific Games since 1975, Team Marianas earned gold medals in only five editions of the games (1987, 1999, 2011, and 2019), including the ongoing 2023 Pacific Games. In the 1999 South Pacific Games held in Guam, the NMI’s two gold medals came from swimmer Xenavee Pangelinan (400m individual medley) and the men’s slowpitch softball team (defeated Guam). In 2011 in New Caledonia, the Joshua Jones-led NMI Men’s Baseball Team won the islands’ lone gold medal in the event. In 2019 in Apia, Samoa, the NMI got three

See TAN on Page 21

2023 PACIFIC GAMES MEDAL STANDINGS (As of November 30, 2023 6:30PM)				
COUNTRY	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE	TOTAL
New Caledonia	73	46	50	169
Tahiti	45	48	46	139
Australia	42	20	8	70
Samoa	32	19	16	67
Fiji	15	23	29	67
Papua New Guinea	14	26	29	69
Solomon Islands	12	29	24	65
Nauru	10	11	6	27
New Zealand	8	10	10	28
Guam	6	4	4	14
Cook Islands	5	3	8	16
Marshall Islands	5	3	2	10
Northern Mariana Islands	5	1	6	12
Kiribati	3	2	6	11
FSM	3	1	0	4
Vanuatu	2	3	6	11
Tonga	1	7	8	16
Wallis and Futuna	0	5	6	11
American Samoa	0	3	3	6
Tuvalu	0	3	0	3
Palau	0	0	3	3
Niue	0	0	1	1
Norfolk Island	0	0	1	1
Tokelau	0	0	0	0

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